

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Notions of “Difference” in Counselling Psychology a Discourse Analysis**

Collins, Farrah

*Award date:*  
2012

*Awarding institution:*  
University of Roehampton

#### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

#### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

# **Notions of “Difference” in Counselling Psychology: a Discourse Analysis**

**By Farrah Collins [BSc]**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PsychD  
Counselling Psychology**

**Department of Psychology**

**University of Roehampton**

**2012**

## **Abstract**

This thesis critiques and describes the prevalent discourses regarding notions of “difference” in counselling psychologist’s talk. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants and were tape-recorded, transcribed and analysed. Participants were asked to speak about notions of “difference” in their counselling psychology practice. Transcripts were then coded and analysed using a critical discursive psychological approach which looked for prevalent interpretive repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. This critical discursive psychology approach seeks to employ a twin focus of discourse analysis, attending to both the micro and macro levels of interactions and constructions. The prevalent discourses were described and critiqued by the researcher. Analysis of transcripts provided a rich range of possible constructions of “difference” and were then grouped into headings and subheadings and presented to the reader. These notions of “difference” are explored in relation to counselling psychology practice and the impact that they may have on therapeutic relationships. Interpretive repertoires included constructions of where “differences” originate, how dimensions of “difference” were constructed, positive and negative constructions of “difference”, “difference” in relation to notions of power and prejudice and finally professional discourses on “difference”. This thesis addresses how important it is for counselling psychologist’s to analyse the discourses and constructions available to them so that their clients’ are facilitated in the therapeutic encounter and so that practitioners’ constructions of “difference” do not hinder therapy. This study contributes to highlighting the need for counselling psychology’s continued commitment to anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practices.

**KEY WORDS:** Difference, Diversity, Counselling Psychology, Discourse Analysis, Critical Discursive Psychology, Anti-oppressive Practice

# **Contents**

Abstract.....	2
List of Tables .....	7
Acknowledgements.....	8
1 Introduction .....	9
1.1 THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP AND NOTIONS OF “DIFFERENCE” .....	9
1.2 THE RESEARCHER’S JOURNEY .....	10
1.3 HOW IS THIS IMPORTANT TO COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY? .....	11
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HOW THEY WILL BE ADDRESSED .....	13
1.5 THESIS OVERVIEW .....	14
2 Literature Review .....	17
2.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	17
2.2 WHAT ARE NOTIONS OF “DIFFERENCE”?.....	17
2.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF “DIFFERENCE” .....	22
2.4 MODERNIST RESEARCH ON “DIFFERENCE” IN COUNSELLING .....	23
2.5 POSTMODERN CONTRIBUTIONS TO “DIFFERENCE” AND COUNSELLING .....	26
2.6 NOTIONS OF POWER AND PREJUDICE .....	29
2.7 “DIFFERENCE” IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY .....	30
2.8 COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH.....	32
2.9 HOW THIS RESEARCH AIMS TO CONTRIBUTE TO COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY.....	38
3 Methodology.....	43
3.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	43
3.2 COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY AND RESEARCH.....	43
3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH .....	45
3.4 EPISTEMOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION .....	46
3.5 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS; A TWIN FOCUS .....	47
3.6 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND NOTIONS OF “DIFFERENCE” .....	52
4 Method .....	56
4.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	56
4.2 DISCOURSE ANALYTIC RESEARCH .....	56
4.3 DATA GATHERING .....	58
4.4 PARTICIPANTS .....	60
4.5 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND STYLE.....	62
4.6 PILOT WORK.....	63
4.7 ETHICS .....	64

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS .....	65
4.8.2 THREE KEY CONCEPTS .....	67
4.9 REFLEXIVITY .....	69
5 Analysis – Description of Findings.....	73
5.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	73
5.2 Origins of “Differences” .....	74
5.2.1 “Differences” as essential versus “Differences” as socially constructed.....	74
5.3 Dimensions of “difference” .....	76
5.3.1 “Difference” as “monocular” .....	76
5.3.2 “Difference” and “race” .....	77
5.3.3 “Difference” as ‘binary and dichotomous’ .....	81
5.4 “Difference” – the good, the bad and the ugly.....	82
5.4.1 “Difference” as ‘pathological and problematic’ .....	83
5.4.2 “Difference” as ‘positive’ .....	85
5.4.3 Minimising “Difference” .....	87
5.5 “Difference”, Power and Prejudice .....	88
5.5.1 “Difference” and ‘prejudice, stereotyping and assumptions’ .....	88
5.5.2 “Difference” and Prejudice Anxiety .....	91
5.5.3 “Difference” and Political Correctness .....	93
5.6 Professional Discourses on “Difference” .....	98
5.6.1 Counselling Psychology – A different discipline.....	98
5.6.2 Counselling Psychologists’ “differences” .....	99
6 Analysis – Critique of Findings .....	103
6.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	103
6.2 Origins of “Differences” .....	103
6.2.1 “Differences” as essential versus “Differences” as socially constructed.....	103
6.3 Dimensions of “Difference” .....	106
6.3.1 “Difference” as ‘Monocular’ .....	106
6.3.2 “Difference” and “race” .....	107
6.3.3 “Difference” as ‘binary and dichotomous’ .....	110
6.4 “Difference” – the good, the bad and the ugly.....	111
6.4.1 “Difference” as ‘pathological and problematic’ .....	111
6.4.2 “Difference” as ‘positive’ .....	112
6.4.3 Minimising “difference” .....	113
6.5 “Difference”, Power and Prejudice .....	114

6.5.1 “Difference” and ‘prejudice, stereotyping and assumptions’ .....	115
6.5.2 “Difference” and Prejudice Anxiety .....	116
6.5.3 “Difference” and Political Correctness .....	117
6.6 Professional Discourses on “difference” .....	118
6.6.1 Counselling Psychology – A different discipline.....	118
6.6.2 Counselling Psychologists’ “differences” .....	119
7 Conclusions .....	120
7.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	120
7.2 RESEARCH SUMMARY .....	120
7.3 DISCUSSION OF CRITICAL DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY .....	122
7.4 IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	129
7.5 THE CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE OF THIS STUDY .....	130
7.6 REFLECTIONS.....	132
7.7 FINAL THOUGHTS.....	134
Bibliography .....	137
Appendices.....	143
APPENDIX I .....	144
APPENDIX II .....	147
APPENDIX III .....	151
APPENDIX IV.....	154
APPENDIX V.....	157
APPENDIX VI.....	158

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Summary of notions of “difference” constructed in counselling psychologists’ discourse .....	121
--	-----



## **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work, during my training at Roehampton University, on this and other related projects. I am grateful to everyone, from library staff to administrators, who have supported me over the past three years.

I would also like to thank each of my training colleagues and tutors on the PsychD Counselling Psychology program who have taught me a great deal about both counselling psychology and life in general.

I owe my most sincere gratitude to my participants for their contribution and participation.

I would especially like to thank Dr. Diane Bray, my Director of Studies and Dr Onel Brookes, my supervisor, for all their assistance, encouragement and support. I would not have been able to navigate the thesis process without them. Thank you for all that you have taught me.

Nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this project than my friends and the members of my family. I would like to thank Saira Hassan for the proof reads, edits and discussions – although ultimately the support. Amir Hassan – thank you for the relief from work and efforts to keep me sane during the research process. I would like to thank my parents, Mohsin and Shaheen Hassan, whose love, guidance and support – financially as well as by other means, has been the foundation of my postgraduate experience. I could never fully describe here what you have given me, but I am eternally indebted.

Most importantly, I owe my loving thanks to my supportive husband, Michael, who has proof read, financially and emotionally supported, encouraged and debated with me, every step of the way. You are my inspiration.

Thank you all.

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP AND NOTIONS OF “DIFFERENCE”**

Counselling psychology has been argued to be based upon a relational framework (Milton, 2010). Counselling psychology places the therapeutic relationship, and the very ability to form relationships with the other, at the very core of practice, research and training (Division of Counselling Psychology, 2004; 2005). This therapeutic relationship can be seen as a contemporary version of many different cultural practices of healing, adjustment, reconciliation or meaning making (McLeod, 2001). Within this relationship, it can be argued that there will be a whole host of “differences” between practitioner and client. Therefore, it can be proposed that “difference” is itself relational, as it is in relation to the other that we see ourselves as different and use our “differences” to construct our identities (Marshall, 2004). Human beings are unique and complex individuals, and these “differences” add to the rich diversity of mankind (Marsella, 2009). Notions of “difference” are the beliefs and ideas which construct “differences”. For this study these “differences” are defined as that which makes people dissimilar or unlike. These “differences”, or rather the constructions of “difference” and their meanings, can have an impact on the life world of the individual. They may also impact on therapeutic practice and the therapeutic relationship. This study aims to examine these notions of “difference”, specifically in counselling psychology practice.

The relational framework described above allows us to view human experience as constructed and intersubjective. If we explore notions of “difference” from this perspective, the “differences” between any two people can be said to be socially

constructed and given meanings situated within a wider context. Various labels and meanings are ascribed to “differences” and it is through the use of language that reality is constructed socially, historically and culturally. Qualitative research in counselling psychology has been credited with allowing practitioners the ability to approach research topics with an openness that allows us to critically examine the legacy of therapeutic knowledge and deconstruct therapeutic language (McLeod, 2001). This thesis therefore, critically approaches notions of “difference” in counselling psychology practice, aiming to critique and describe the prevalent notions of “difference” in what counselling psychologists say and examining the implications of this for practice, training and research.

## **1.2 THE RESEARCHER’S JOURNEY**

The qualitative researcher may never be “objective” or distanced from the research (McLeod, 2001). Therefore, it seems important and necessary for the reader to have an overview of the personal nature of this research topic and the origins of this thesis. As therapist or client, notions of “difference” have always been at play, overtly or covertly, when I have engaged in therapeutic relationships. Maybe that is due to my minority positioning as a British Asian female and the impact that this “difference” has had upon my life. Consequently, “difference” has always been prominent in my reflective practice and in my personal therapy. When engaging in therapeutic encounters, I assume that there will be similarities and “differences” between myself and the person before me. Within these therapeutic relationships I also aim to acknowledge diversity. The implications of this, for better or for worse, were something that I began to wonder about. I contemplated to what extent my personal

subjective experiences of “difference” and my constructions of “differences” affected therapy. Specifically, as a practitioner how does the way I conceptualised and spoke about notions of “difference” impact the therapeutic relationship? What parts of a client’s narrative did my constructions facilitate and how did they hinder? What were these constructions allowing me to see and what were they obscuring?

Within my training and practice I was often struck by how little attention was paid to “differences”. Anti-oppressive practice is defined in this thesis as challenging practices which do not give primacy to humane concerns and which result in hardship and injustice to the other (Lago and Smith, 2010). At times, during training, it seemed to me that anti-oppressive practice was considered as adjunct to the real therapeutic work, rather than at the very core of counselling psychology, as directed by codes of conduct (Division of Counselling Psychology, 2008). This thesis originated from these wonderings and observations and developed into a critical discursive psychological study of counselling psychologists’ discourses on notions of “difference”. The objective of analysing the prevalent discourses regarding notions of “difference” in counselling psychology would be to examine how language conveys these discourses, and then explore what social realities are constructed. This would allow counselling psychology as a discipline to critique, challenge and change the discourses of notions of “difference” and explore whether we could, or should, think differently about “difference”.

### **1.3 HOW IS THIS IMPORTANT TO COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY?**

The significance of this thesis and the contribution that it can make will be explored fully in the closing chapters. However, in exploring the prevalent notions of

“difference”, a contribution is being made to counselling psychology literature and practice that attempts to acknowledge the relational nature of “differences” and gives primacy to the importance of anti-oppressive practice. It seeks to reinforce the need for therapeutic practice to acknowledge that there is more to notions of “difference” in therapy than seeing a “black” or a “gay” or a “disabled” client: that rather, each client has a voice and narrative that constructs their individual meanings of what it is to be them. It is also important to acknowledge the multiplicity and complexity of various “differences”. In other words, what is the best way for a practitioner to facilitate clients in exploring what it has meant to be a “black”, “gay” or “disabled” individual in this culture, at this time, and what it may mean in this therapeutic encounter? Also, what is the best way to acknowledge the intersectionality of “differences” (Burman, 2004) compared to the traditional monocular approach which focuses on single dimensions of “difference” rather than the subjective experience of what it may mean to be a “white”, deaf woman, or a bisexual, “Asian” man? This critical thinking and engagement is highly important and has significantly changed my own practice. Hopefully this thesis will encourage other practitioners to consider their approach to “difference” in their own practice so as to further embrace anti-oppressive practice and allow for ethical responsibilities to the other to be reinforced (Cooper, 2009). If therapy is positioned on the fence between liberation and social control (McLeod, 2001), it is important that it is an open, inclusive and non oppressive process for ourselves, our clients and in the wider context of society. I would like this research to encourage a critical stance and ways of thinking about “difference” that promote a deep personal commitment to anti-oppressive practice rather than a cursory glance at equal opportunities policy. I would like to encourage practitioners in

attending to notions of “difference” so that we, as a profession, do not inadvertently collude with the structural inequality that pervades at all levels of society.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HOW THEY WILL BE ADDRESSED**

It can be seen then that the aim of this research is to describe and critique the prevalent notions of “difference” and then explore the implications. Consequently, the questions addressed would include: what discourses are prevalent around notions of “difference” in counselling psychology? How do counselling psychologists’ talk about notions of “difference”? Where does this position them? Do any ideological dilemmas present themselves in this way of talking? How does this compare to notions of “difference” in the literature? How can notions of “difference” be located, historically, socially and politically, and within the context of counselling psychology?

The research questions outlined above will be addressed through the implementation of a critical discursive psychology method. Critical discursive psychology will employ a twin focus approach (Wetherell, 1998), attending to both the micro, and macro, levels of social constructions. This provides a powerful contribution towards understanding constructions of phenomena (Edley & Wetherell, 1996; 1997; Wetherell & Edley, 1998; 1999), in this case of notions of “difference”. Spong (2009) states how discourse analysis can help practitioners to address key issues, such as what counselling discourses enable us to say and what they obscure. It can clarify the frameworks used to make sense of what our clients bring to therapy, how therapeutic practice may reinforce broader social discourses and where they then position practitioners and their clients (Spong, 2009). This type of analysis is important in understanding the discourses available to, and constructed by, practitioners within counselling

psychology, which is essential to the maintenance of a critical reflective stance towards practice (Spong, 2009).

## **1.5 THESIS OVERVIEW**

This thesis is formed of seven chapters. Firstly, there is this chapter, the introduction, which aims to provide an overview of the research, the topic, its origins and the significance of exploring notions of “difference”. It also provides an overview of what is to come in the following chapters. This will then be followed by a literature review, a chapter which critically discusses literature related to this thesis. Following this will be the methodology and method chapters where the epistemological position and particulars of this study will be explored. Finally, this culminates in the analysis of interview data followed by its discussion and conclusions.

In the second chapter, the literature review chapter, the aim is to present an overview of the literature that is relevant to this thesis. Firstly, the topic of notions of “difference” is explored and defined and then located in the literature. What will become clear to the reader as the chapter progresses is the justification for this research. The chapter also aims to critically appraise the contributions of philosophy, counselling, sociology, psychology, and specifically counselling psychology to the study of notions of “difference”. This research proposes that these disciplines may be able to contribute to the discussion of how counselling psychology could construct “difference”. A critical approach will be used to explore debates surrounding notions of “difference” and therapeutic practice. The aims and objectives of this thesis will then be explained in regard to the gaps, challenges and critiques presented in the current literature.

In the third chapter, the methodology, there will be an outline of the organising principles underlying the study of notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. This chapter seeks to lay the foundations of engaging with research within counselling psychology and the tenets of a practitioner doctorate within the field. It outlines the epistemological and ontological background to the study and presents the method of critical discursive psychology and its epistemological roots. It will start by exploring counselling psychology and its relationship to research. It then explicates the choice of qualitative methodology and the chosen discourse analytic methodology and its suitability in contributing to the counselling psychology knowledge base. It also presents an overview of the researcher’s positioning.

In chapter 4, the method chapter, the particulars of this study are laid out for the reader and there is an explanation of how the research questions were addressed. This thesis achieved its aims through gathering data via eight semi-structured interviews. These were tape-recorded, transcribed and analysed using a critical discursive psychology method. These processes are fully described in this chapter.

Having described the processes of data gathering and analysis, Chapter 5, the first analysis chapter, aims to present the analysis of the interview data elicited. The presentation of findings in discourse analytic studies varies (Willig, 2001). In this thesis the analysis of the data is explicated in one chapter and then followed by a separate analytic critique chapter for ease of reading. The analysis is structured in the form of headings and subheadings which present the interpretive repertoires that this researcher has encountered during the analysis phase of this research and any ideological dilemmas or subject positions that became apparent. These are demonstrated using extracts from the transcripts of the tape-recorded interviews.



These extracts and their descriptions are presented here to guide the reader through the findings. As suggested by Willig (2001) the structure of this section will reflect both the research questions and the emphasis of analysis. This chapter represents the researchers attempt to make sense of patterns in the ways participants spoke about notions of “difference”.

In the sixth chapter; analysis – critiquing the findings, the thesis aims to discuss the prevalent notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. After guiding the reader through the interpretive repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions encountered during analysis, they will be discussed in more detail and with reference to counselling psychology literature and the wider context.

Finally, in chapter 7, conclusions, overarching themes from within the thesis are discussed. Firstly, there is a summary of the research findings. Then there is a discussion critiquing critical discursive psychology and a consideration of any other methodological or reflexive issues that presented themselves during the research process. Then there is a discussion of the contributions of this thesis to counselling psychology and its limitations. This is followed by potential implications for further research. This researcher’s reflexive commentary is concluded and some final thoughts are discussed.

The chief aim of this research was to describe and critique the prevalent notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. The aim of this researcher was to promote debate as to how to construct “differences” in ways which facilitate anti-oppressive practice. This research seeks to encourage practitioners to think about their language use, in therapy and outside, and to question whether they could, or should, think differently about “difference”.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presents an overview of the literature that is relevant to this thesis. It explores notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. Firstly, notions of “difference” are explored and defined and then located in the literature. This chapter critically appraises the contributions of several disciplines and a range of research and literature to the study of notions of “difference”. A critical approach is used to explore current debates surrounding notions of “difference” and therapeutic practice. The aims and objectives of this thesis are explained, in regard to the gaps, challenges and critiques presented in the literature.

### **2.2 WHAT ARE NOTIONS OF “DIFFERENCE”?**

Notions of “difference” refer to the beliefs and conceptions regarding “difference”. “Difference” can be defined as the state or quality of being unlike. It may also be seen as a distinguishing mark or feature that makes people dissimilar or it could be the degree of distinctness between two people or things. For the purposes of this study, “difference” refers to the idea that between any two people or things that which makes them dissimilar are their “differences”. In the wider context of society our collective “differences” may be seen as the diversity of mankind (Marsella, 2009). For this study, the distinction between “difference” and diversity is that diversity is an acknowledgement of people in society and the range thereof. “Difference”, however, is arguably more of a relational notion whereby one can only be different in relation to the other. This study aims to explore how these notions of “difference” are

constructed as well as the subsequent labelling systems, and meanings and experiences ascribed to these various constructions.

The area referred to within this study is the notions and discourses regarding “working with “difference”” or enabling “difference” within therapeutic practice and specifically counselling psychological practice. Marshall (2004) states that we are all unique individuals and when we are in relation to the other we see that we are both like, and unlike, other people (Marshall, 2004). Marshall (2004) proposes that despite our uniqueness, we look for those with common features to us and it is in the company of those common features that we are at our most comfortable. Conversely, it would seem that notions of “difference” are arguably more challenging and potentially divisive than notions of “similarity”. Historically, socially and politically, notions of “difference” are seen as more problematic than notions of “similarity” (Marshall, 2004). Debatably, it is on grounds of what makes us the same that we are able to explore notions of “equality” as we are more comfortable when we are able to identify with elements of someone’s experience. Notions of “difference”, however, may elicit a whole host of reactions, some of which may potentially lead to discrimination. If we have a human need for sameness as Marshall (2004) argues, then how do we work with our “differences” in therapy? As practitioners working in a political climate, to what extent does this permeate the therapeutic relationship? Where there is notably a backlash to a heightened awareness of the implications of social prejudice and “political correctness”, are we able to acknowledge and process our prejudices? Are we able to move beyond the intellectual acceptance or politically correct facade in order to look at reactions to “difference” and the deeper processes at work?

Traditionally the main debate about notions of “difference” in counselling psychology is finding the best way to work with the socially constructed dimensions of “difference” such as: “gender”, “sexuality”, “race”, “culture”, “ethnicity”, “physical and mental ability” and “class” (Burman, 2004). It has been put forward that being linked to a minority position in these groups may mean that life experiences will be harder (Moodley & Lubin, 2008). It has also been postulated that there may be a physical, emotional and psychological consequence to being ascribed a stigmatised identity, particularly one which places you as a minority in “the big seven” (Moodley and Lubin, 2008). The “big seven” stigmatised identities are purported to be: “race”, “gender”, “sexual orientation”, “class”, “disability”, “religion” and “age” (Moodley and Lubin, 2008). It may be noted that every individual will be classified in some way by the list above and can be described and labelled by these dimensions of “difference”. However, dominant or majority groups seldom define their positions relative to minorities but take the position of normative identities from which the minorities deviate from. For example, being “white” is a racialised identity in a racialised society and yet it is often considered the “norm” (Ryde, 2009). Consequently, the minorities in these dimensions of “difference” may be positioned as deviant or pathological and this can lead to discrimination and inequality. This has led to a call for critical thinking regarding the taken for granted knowledge embedded within society (Lago & Smith, 2010). Many fields, including counselling, have highlighted the need to approach the field of “difference” and “diversity” with an ethos of inclusion and increased awareness. There has been an encouragement of practitioners to apply critical reflection to what it means to be placed in these minority and majority groups, what it means to be labelled in this way, and the subsequent power dynamics and positioning of people within society.

Increased awareness, critical thinking and engagement with issues of “difference” have increasingly been a part of training courses and ethical practices within the UK (Lago and Smith, 2010). However, this is often seen as extra to the “real” therapeutic work (Cooper, 2010 as cited in Lago and Smith, 2010). More recently there has been a movement in the literature to discussions regarding anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practices (Lago and Smith, 2010). If counselling psychology seeks to focus on the relational, the wellbeing of clients, and an appreciation of the otherness of the other (Manafi, 2010), then anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice must surely be intertwined with the very core of therapeutic training and practice, rather than as a secondary concern.

Identities are constructed when people are labelled according to perceived dimensions of “difference”. Each of these labels carries a social and political history and various meanings are ascribed to them. Consequently, therapeutic practice ought to be able to acknowledge this complexity and engage with the issues and challenges notions of “difference” can evoke. Firstly for practitioners on a personal and professional level, looking at our own “differences” and positions, and the impact this may have had upon us and our own prejudices. Secondly, engagement is needed so that we can facilitate clients to be able to speak about their experiences including, but not limited to, their “differences”. Finally, engagement with issues of “difference” is needed at a social and political level, where societal inequalities and social constructions may be embedded.

It can be noted there has been an increase in the literature bases for the various dimensions of “differences”, specifically those which attend to the politically structured nature of human being’s (including but not limited to D’Ardenne & Mahtani, 1989; Eleftheriadou, 2010; Lago & Thompson, 1996; Lofthouse, 2010; Pederson, 1999;

Ryde, 2009; Bhugra & Bhui, 1998 on matters of race and culture; Tindall, Robinson, & Kagan, 2010 on gender; Corker, 1994, Segal, 1997 on disability; Hicks, 2010; Hicks & Milton, 2010 on sexual identity; Kearney, 1996 on class). The published voices' of therapists have sought to encourage those in the profession to become familiar with such literature bases. They suggest considering the different dimensions of "difference", the socially, culturally and politically constructed nature of human beings and how these play out in the relational (Lago and Smith, 2010). This literature, although contributing greatly to the knowledge base, is not the focus of this study.

Rather, this study aims to explore all notions of "difference"<sup>1</sup>, of which these dimensions are examples. In other words, although the specific dimensions of "difference" and their constructions may emerge from the data, it will not be the only focus. This study aims to step back from a monocular approach, in the sense of looking at one "difference", to looking at notions of "difference". The aim is to broaden the scope for potential constructions of notions of "difference". This is to allow for constructions to emerge which may open the possibilities to multiple identities, intersectionality of "differences" and move beyond rigid classificatory systems. Each of the dimensions of "difference" can therefore be seen to have its own set of discourses and debates. This study does not seek to homogenise these dimensions of "difference" and in any way assemble them into an overarching system of looking at "difference". Rather, it seeks to hold the tension between assumed homogeny when looking at these "differences" together and the more rigid division of "difference" into fixed indices of "difference". This study aims to maintain an agnostic

---

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis "difference" is placed in quotation marks. This is firstly to remind the reader and researcher that we are questioning "difference" and therefore not to take anything for granted in our use of the word. It is also placed in quotation marks to highlight that this thesis assumes that it is through speech that our notions of "difference" are constructed.

stance, whereby the constructions of “difference” can be described and critiqued as they emerge in the data. This research does not presume that attending to notions of difference collectively or individually is better or worse, rather that they both highlight and obscure different issues.

### **2.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF “DIFFERENCE”**

Having established a focus and defining the notions of “difference” that will be described and critiqued in the study, it is important to look at the social constructionist underpinnings of research into notions of “difference”. If we turn to the sociological literature base there is a body of knowledge which aims to explore how we understand society. Specifically, it examines how we attempt to make sense of the patterns of “difference” between individuals and groups, which raises a number of key issues relating to “difference” (Saranga, 1998). From this sociological perspective, we are invited to ask about the “differences” in our society, the consequences and repercussions of the “differences” we construct and we are invited to examine where these constructions come from (Saranga, 1998). In other words we are invited by social scientists to explore the way in which we construct “differences” and the implications of these constructions. This notion of social construction has permeated into psychology also and facilitates the exploration of taken for granted knowledge embedded in society (Burr, 2003). Social constructionism is a perspective that has many competing and differing ideas and factions (Burr, 2003). It positions many aspects of society as being created within the social realm and given meanings by society, rather than to innate biological functions and evolutionary processes (Saranga, 1998). It also positions language at centre stage (Saranga, 1998). Everyday

interactions between people can be seen as producing “knowledge” and this “knowledge” is often taken for granted assumptions that create our understanding of social phenomena. Social constructionism looks at the consequences of language use. This is done specifically in psychological research methods through the approach of discourse analysis. This will be explored in more depth in the following chapter concerning methodology.

The idea that the notions of “difference” are constructed through language means that the way we speak and act offers up many different meanings and implications. This opens up the possibility of looking at how identities are constructed by suggesting that identity is formed in relation to the “other” and by “similarity” and “difference” (Woodward, 1997). In this way we can see that notions of “differences” become constructed through an interaction between signifiers of “difference” and their classificatory systems. These classificatory systems and “labels” have meanings in society. These meanings position the labelled subject. Therefore, social constructionism allows us to examine constructions within counselling psychology and perhaps begin to address inequalities within a wider context.

## **2.4 MODERNIST RESEARCH ON “DIFFERENCE” IN COUNSELLING**

Moller (2011) stated counselling psychology in the United States has focussed on “multiculturalism” and “diversity” as part of its philosophy and has been identified as being politically active in addressing inequalities present in society. There has also been an increase in the amount of research on the subject (Moller, 2011). Comparatively, Moller (2011) argues the UK has not engaged in such a way or made such a commitment and that critical thinking about “difference” and diversity is



shamefully lacking. There has in fact been a great deal of literature regarding dimensions of “difference” (see list of references on page 19). What Moller (2011) seems to be highlighting is the need for a re-engagement with “difference” and diversity, in research and in practice, in new and fruitful ways. This study aims to do that by examining how notions of “difference” are being constructed by counselling psychologists in the UK.

Exploring the United States’ literature base further, it can be seen that the majority of this research rests on modernist conceptions of “difference” in counselling. The US base of “multicultural” counselling research focuses on a “multicultural competency model” (Abreu, Gim Chung, & Atkinson, 2000; Fukuyama, 1990; Sue, et al., 1982). “Cross Cultural” and “Multicultural” counselling has been defined as a counselling relationship where those involved differ in respect to cultural background, values and lifestyle (Sue, et al., 1982) and with this working definition we are able to trace a history of a “cross cultural” counselling movement as far back as the 1950’s (Abreu, Gim Chung, & Atkinson, 2000). The “cross cultural” movement and literature from this epistemological base may be broadly categorised into; those who support the need for multicultural competencies for each specific dimension of “difference” and those which seek to find generic competencies and critique the specialisation for specific dimensions of “difference” and culture “matching” literature (Vallianatou, Leavey, & Brown, 2007). One well established model is that mentioned above, Sue et al (1982), which bases competency in working “cross culturally” along three dimensions;

- A counsellor’s awareness of their own personal assumptions, values and bias.
- Understanding the world view of the different “other”.
- Developing appropriate and effective interventions and techniques.

(For a detailed overview of this multicultural literature base and meta analyses of the research see; Edwards & Pederotti, 2008; Worthington & Soth-McNett, 2007; Yoon, Langrehr, & Ong, 2011). The issue this thesis raises with this type of research is that its epistemology lies in positivistic and modernist philosophy, which seems incongruous with the more postmodern and pluralist stance of counselling psychology in the UK currently (Cooper, 2009). Traditional research and its epistemology can be critiqued from a postmodern stance. One such criticism applies to the epistemology of the quantitative approach and the subsequent operationalisation of concepts such as “knowledge” and “competency”. The notion of “acquiring competency” and “knowledge” when working with notions of “difference” is problematic because one can ask, what is this “knowledge” and what “competencies” are practitioners meant to be acquiring? When looking at notions of “cultural differences”, for example, in the counselling psychology and anthropology literature, where does information about different “cultures” come from? If we read studies about a specific group of people it is important to question such “knowledge”. From a postmodern stance it is important to explore the potential ethnocentric assumptions that can underpin the study of other “cultures”. It is also important to question any sense of assumed homogeneity within groups. Therefore, in acquiring “knowledge” about diverse cultures there are problems regarding generalisation and stereotyping, the origins and purposes of such studies and the implications that such inferred homogeneity of groups may have (Gillis & Diamond, 2006).

Social constructionism critiques whether attending to individual “differences” and acquiring “knowledge” about them is helpful. Arguably, this approach ignores the multiplicity and complexity of “differences” as they intersect, as well as creating rigid

social constructs of “difference” (Burman, 2004). Critiques of the counselling literature regarding notions of “difference” are a starting point for thinking about notions of “difference” in unique and challenging ways. However, this resurrects the debate as to the best way to work therapeutically with “difference”. In order to begin to think about this as a profession it is important to explore how notions of “difference” are constructed in counselling psychological practice. This is the focus of this study, to explore prevalent notions of “difference” in counselling psychology, how they are constructed and the implications of this.

## **2.5 POSTMODERN CONTRIBUTIONS TO “DIFFERENCE” AND COUNSELLING**

To fully explore notions of “difference” in counselling psychology it is important to consider the contributions of underlying philosophies and concepts that may offer important insights. These include, but are not limited to, deconstruction, postmodernism and discourse. For some, Derrida and Foucault are the two chief protagonists of postmodernism (Cahoone, 1996). Looking first at Derrida it can be seen that above all things he was concerned mainly with language (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003). He was greatly influenced by Husserl, Heidegger and Levinas (Derrida, 1997a as cited in Woods, 1992) and has now had an enormous influence on humanities from linguistics to sociology. The most applicable contribution made by Derrida for this study would be his invitation to examine the instability of language (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003). Many have attributed the evolution of “deconstruction” to Derrida, the idea that “truth” itself is always relative to the differing standpoints and the intellectual frameworks of the judging subject (Butler, 2002). The deconstructive stance has implications, firstly for the field of counselling psychology, by suggesting

this as an approach to listening to clients and ourselves allowing for the possibility of multiple truths (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003). Secondly, it has ramifications for this study as this stance opens up the possibilities of questioning the boundaries of social roles, their validity, and the presupposed dominance of the conceptual frameworks in which they are situated (Butler, 2002). The deconstructive stance has been effective in questioning restrictive ideologies in this way by offering a transgressive-deconstructive loosening of the boundaries of our thoughts about dimensions of “difference” such as “gender”, “race”, “sexuality” and many others (Butler, 2002). This can be seen to have resulted in the demand for recognition of “differences”, and the growing appreciation of the other (Butler, 2002), which can be seen to overlap with similar proposed ideologies within the discipline of counselling psychology (Manafi, 2010), and in exploring Levinas’s (1969) contribution to psychological therapies (which will be looked at later in this chapter, p32).

Similarly, Derrida’s (1976) contribution of the concept of *différance* also has implications for this study. For Derrida, *différance* was a new word derived from the verb *differer*, meaning both to defer, and to differ. *Différance* is said to encapsulate both meanings: “difference” and deferral, and so alludes to the instability of language and the notion that words have meanings only in relation to other words, through their “differences” and these relationships are always in a state of flux, meaning therefore is always deferred (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003). Therefore, in language there is a play on “differences”. They are generated by the signifiers which are themselves products of those “differences”. We often mistake these linguistic constructions for fixed constructs (Sarup, 1993 as cited in Loewenthal and Snell, 2003). From this it can be seen that the dimensions of “difference”, we often refer to as markers of identity,

are instable in themselves and again this encourages us to question the boundaries and meanings of these labels.

It is difficult to talk about discourse and “difference” without mentioning Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1971a; 1971b). He is most famous for his anti-humanist challenge, and in proposing the death of the human subject and the death too, of the author (Foucault, 1971a; 1971b). Also in critiquing and challenging the Cartesian model he has been able to open up a field of investigation into social and discursive practices (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003). He will be discussed further in the next chapter, where it is also important to recognise his contribution to discourse, and deconstruction.

Both philosophy and epistemology can contribute to the study of notions of “difference”. It is important therefore to build upon the knowledge already provided here. Postmodern thought has allowed for a subtle questioning and reframing of notions of “difference”. The postmodern influence on counselling psychology has added the dimension of questioning and deconstructing thinking around diagnosis, labels, how we think about the "other", and subsequently how we practice. But it is also important to acknowledge the tension that counselling psychology holds between that postmodern position and the modernist foundation of psychology that it was built upon. Although it proclaims to be influenced by postmodern thought, and to utilise a humanistic value base, it is a discipline that was born out of psychology, traditionally a construct from a modernist, positivistic viewpoint. It is important to acknowledge this tension at all times, as to train as a counselling psychologist one must complete an undergraduate psychology degree, and thus have that foundation. It is from within this epistemological base that much of the traditional positivist research into notions of “difference” in both counselling, and psychology, has been done. Therefore, it will

be important to explore whether counselling psychology constructs notions of “difference” from the more modernist epistemologies of its foundations, or the postmodern critiques it has aligned itself with in more recent times.

## **2.6 NOTIONS OF POWER AND PREJUDICE**

Although this study focuses on the central concept of “difference”, it is important to acknowledge themes which support and add to the complexity of notions of “difference”, such as notions of “power” and notions of “prejudice”. It seems necessary when discussing notions of “difference” to refer to them both briefly. Notions of “power” and their implications are not the focus of this study but it is important to acknowledge that the way in which counselling psychologists construct notions of “differences” will invariably position them as subjects, as well as their clients. These relative positions and their meanings and implications may involve and construct various power dynamics which will need to be noted (Chantler, 2005).

Notions of “prejudice” are often discussed in research and philosophy within both sociology and social psychology. There is debate regarding any coherent theory or definition, and from a postmodernist perspective, even if there were one, one must be questioning of it (Brown, 1995). Arguably here, notions of “prejudice” can be something within us all that is a negative or an uncomfortable response to “difference” (Brown, 1995). More true to social constructionist ideologies is the notion that “prejudice” is “pre-judging” with a negative pre conception about a group or person (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Subsequently, examining our own notions of “prejudice” and their constructions at a micro level of consulting rooms and our contribution to the prejudices at a macro, societal level is pivotal for practitioners. This thesis does

not aim to focus on such notions of power or prejudice but should they emerge in the constructions of notions of “difference”, they will be discussed further.

## **2.7 “DIFFERENCE” IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY**

Counselling psychology in the UK concerns itself with integrating psychological theory, research and therapeutic practice (Orlans & Scoyoc, 2009). Within this, the discipline seeks to focus on wellbeing rather than psychopathology and highlights a relational view where it promotes an understanding of human beings as being dialogical in nature and acknowledging the otherness of the other (Manafi, 2010). This relational framework illuminates practice, allowing us to see ourselves and our clients as beings that are in relation to the world and to other people. It promotes the exploration of subjective experience, as well as locating practice within a social, historical and political context (Manafi, 2010). This study is built on these humanistic foundations. Counselling psychology is said to be going through a time of turbulence and increasing speculation in regard to its identity (Cooper, 2009). However, it has been identified as having a “humanistic” core of values and ethics, which is arguably in essence, exemplified best through Levinas’s (1969) concept of ‘welcoming the other’. For many counselling psychologists, the very distinction of counselling psychology is its philosophical underpinnings and the values and ethics associated with this (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2003). The humanistic values that underlie counselling psychological practice, allow us to seek to engage with our clients, giving primacy to wellbeing, rather than focussing on deviancy, diagnostics, pathology or reductive notions of clients as objects (Cooper, 2009).

Although not a humanist, this notion of ethical practice seems best put forward by Levinas (1969) and his notions of 'welcoming the other'. He means, in this notion of 'welcoming the other', which lies at the very core of his 'ethical metaphysics', the "other" can only be encountered in ethical rapport with other humans, and that one should honour the other, in all their otherness (Levinas, 1969). He explicates that the other, is "irreducibly strange" and "infinitely foreign". For Levinas, it can be seen therefore that the other, and their otherness, takes precedence over sameness. He criticises western philosophy which tries to reduce "difference" to sameness (Kearney, 1995), or to neutralise the other, so as to reduce it to something which can be seen as familiar. Rather than this, he calls for recognition of the other and its fundamental unknowability, a privileging of the unique other client in front of us, over the 'psychagogic rhetoric', such as the labels, theories and assumptions used by practitioners. For Cooper (2009), Levinas's stance articulates what is at the heart of counselling psychology, manifesting in therapy by practitioners prioritising the subjective, facilitating growth, empowering clients, working in a democratic relationship and appreciating the client as a unique being, which is socially and relationally embedded in a wider context.

If these are the underpinnings of counselling psychology, constructions of notions of "difference" within the profession would endeavour to reflect the recognition of the other, in all their otherness. As Ryde (2009) states if we skate over differences in search for similarity this will make therapy more superficial and conceal important underlying assumptions regarding notions of "difference". Questioning these assumptions is crucial (Ryde, 2009). This thesis takes the view that the ethical standpoint of responsibility to the other, coupled with the deconstruction of rigid



“differences”, would allow counselling psychology to be a profession which is able to explore “difference” in therapeutic practice. Counselling psychologists, with these philosophical underpinnings, would therefore be able to promote well being and make a fundamental commitment to anti-oppressive practice. The following section in this chapter aims to explore existing research which has contributed to constructions of “difference” in counselling psychology, critiquing the extent to which this is the case.

## **2.8 COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH**

So far in the chapter we have looked at social constructions of “difference”, the modernist conceptions of “difference” in therapy and looked at the philosophical contributions to notions of “difference” in counselling psychology, and the postmodern challenge to positivist research regarding “difference”. Subsequently, counselling psychology with its philosophical underpinnings should be constructed in a way that honours humanistic principles and ethical practice. This thesis aims to explore practitioners’ constructions, their meanings and implications, and whether this is indeed the case. It is important though to look at the constructions available in terms of specific research and literature that has contributed to the body of knowledge and discourses regarding notions of “difference” in therapeutic practice. This study seeks to explore notions of “difference” in counselling psychology however, it is important to acknowledge the contributions and influences from other disciplines such as counselling and psychotherapy, under the umbrella of psychological therapy.

Eleftheriadou (2010) explores the academic debates surrounding the area and the approaches from psychology to examining “cross-cultural” psychology. He gives an informed and interesting debate regarding how best to examine and work with

“difference” but then continues to list a set of operationalised ideas about how to work clinically with “difference”. This is a good starting point and offers the reader an overview to many of the issues in the area of cross-cultural psychology, as mentioned above. However, the tone and presentation, as well as the underpinnings of the research presented, takes up a modernist psychological position. Subsequently, when the chapter progresses into the realm of the “clinical” therapeutic work, it seeks to find generic operationalised skills which may be transferable when working with someone who is the different “other”. This thesis questions the extent to which this allows the narrative of the individual to emerge, or whether this allows counselling psychologists to think critically about notions of “difference”<sup>2</sup>. It highlights to me how the different “other” may be seen as different to the counselling psychologist or different to the majority group, with little scope for exploration of the subjective meanings. It also highlights that counselling psychologists may be tempted to use “multicultural competencies” and theories, rather than allow for the individual narrative of a client to emerge, out of anxieties regarding working with “differences”.

In Wheeler’s (2006) edited collection she compiles a complex and diverse range of discussions regarding “difference” and “diversity” within counselling. It claims to be for practitioners, in training and experienced, to enhance their thinking regarding issues of “difference” that affect practice. It proposes to promote engagement with “difference” on many levels. It looks at the macro level general theories of “difference” and “diversity” and also attends to the micro level, the marginality and oppression that can permeate therapy. It also purports to resist homogenising the

---

<sup>2</sup> This researcher would like to clarify her own perspective and values here. This thesis seeks to highlight the need for facilitative discourses regarding “difference” and this practitioner-researcher would urge all psychological therapeutic professions to embrace anti-oppressive practices, research and training. From this ethical position of welcoming the “other” (Cooper, 2009) this research will critique the counselling psychology literature.

different dimensions of “difference”. The positioning of the book seeks to explore the “shadow side” of the therapist and encourages us as practitioners to engage with our prejudices and to think about and look at our anxieties when working with “differences”. It promotes a deeper analysis into the politicised nature of therapy and discourse, and seeks to further our thinking regarding structured notions of “difference”. Aligned with many of the aims of this thesis, it seeks to promote critical engagement with the issues regarding notions of “difference”.

However, it can also be seen that the book focuses still on the “differences” of our clients, perpetuating notions of the different “other”, different from ourselves and subsequently creating a them/us mentality, or seeing the different client as deviant or deficient from ourselves or our cultural norms. This leaves little room for critical reflections of counselling psychologists’ own “difference”. It also ignores intersectionality and multiplicity of “difference” and identity. For example, what it means to have a specific gendered identity will change regarding other identities, for example, what it means to be a woman, is hugely impacted by race, age, sexuality and many other indices of “difference”. This book pays little attention to this and rather explores “differences” in a monocular fashion. This may lead to clients being defined by one specific “difference”, and does not acknowledge the rich and complex nature of “difference” and its meanings within therapy.

Marshall (2004) writes about “difference” and discrimination in counselling and psychotherapy. Marshall (2004) writes firstly, about the unique nature of the individual, and how similarity and “difference” allow us to define our identity. She goes on to explore notions of prejudice and responses to “difference”, and how historically they have been problematic (Marshall, 2004). She examines how helping

professionals can sign up to an intellectual acceptance of “difference” without acknowledging an innate aversion to “difference” working at a deeper level (Marshall, 2004). Marshall (2004) explores how past “prejudices” and the associated shame and guilt has now led to the reactionary move towards discourses of celebrating “difference”, and the promotion of notions of “multiculturalism”. The major critique she puts forward here is that practitioners can be seen as oscillating between embracing similarities, or over celebrating “difference”. What emerges for Marshall (2004) is the need to be able to see “difference” as elements to be acknowledged in therapy but without blinding us to similarity, or relegating “differences” to the problematic other.

This engagement with difference is theoretically promising. However, the same criticism lobbied at Wheeler (2006) may be made here. What can be seen in the subsequent chapters is a grouping of “differences” in a monocular, homogenous fashion. Marshall (2004) goes on to look at “differences” in isolation, in binary and dichotomous structures and perpetuating notions of rigid constructs and losing the multiplicity of “difference”, ignoring the “differences” in the practitioner, and excluding the intersubjective and relational.

For this thesis, one of the most important writers is Burman (2004), as she takes the postmodern stance and deconstructive lens and applies it directly to notions of “difference”. Burman (2004) examines the theme of “enabling difference” and defines this as the current and central challenge for counselling psychology. She names the central debate, as explored in this study, as to how best to acknowledge and work with structural axes of “difference”, in a way that is creative and useful, allowing us to critically challenge the oppression present in the dominant social

discourses (Burman, 2004). Burman (2004) presents the idea of working with notions of “difference” without pathologising them or seeing them as obstacles that prevent us from fully understanding the other. She goes on to explore the current discourses in therapy regarding “difference” (Burman, 2004). One discourse she describes is that of reaching out to the marginalised other where we as therapists reach out to those less fortunate than ourselves (Burman, 2004). This discourse positions us as hierarchically above the different other and takes a paternalistic and colonising stance. Burman (2004) also questions whether we only notice “difference” in others and when it deviates from our assumed “norms”. This highlights another discourse around notions of “difference”, where we do not talk about all “difference”, or our “difference”, but instead that which we see to be radical, deviant or deficient. She also notes the discourse which focuses not on “difference”, but on “sameness”, forcing homogeneity which ignores and minimises issues of power. Finally, Burman (2004) explores the discourses regarding “differences”. These are then attended individually which denies the multiplicity and complexity of multiple identities as well as being the foundation for political hierarchies of oppression. Burman (2004) presents a clear discussion regarding discourses around “difference” in counselling and calls for more facilitative discourses. One such discourse is that of intersectionality, exploring where various indicies of “difference” meet and the meanings of these multiple identities. This is arguably a way forward which would side step many of the problematic discourses, which seem to oppose the ethos of counselling psychology. This research aims to build on these critiques, and suggests that counselling psychologists’ need to ensure they apply critical thinking to constructions of “difference”. Counselling psychology can examine which discourses are still used, why they are in use and how they may translate into the therapy room.

This postmodernist and deconstructive stance being applied to the area of “difference”, has been further advocated by Gillis and Diamond (2006), where they again acknowledge the pathologising nature of attitudes to “difference” and an over emphasis on binary constructs related to dimensions of “difference”. They go further than Burman (2004), in discussing the need to address the assumptions within mainstream discourses, in psychology and society, which contain implicit colonial, racist, patriarchal or ethnocentric discourses. They suggest further research and discussion is undertaken to deconstruct dichotomous or binary systems of classification and how they manifest in our discourses regarding “difference”. They suggest a deconstruction of how we construct multiple identities, and an emphasis on how human identity can be shaped by interplay of forces that determine how unique individuals experience themselves and the world around them. As proposed by Gillis and Diamond (2006), this study aims to further research and discuss constructions of notions of “difference”, within counselling psychology practice.

Lago and Smith (2010) hail from a deeply entrenched value base which aims to examine and challenge oppressive practices both on an internal level within therapeutic practice and in a wider context. They encourage critical thinking in the issues around “difference” and invites practitioners to engage with the issues discussed above and to approach “differences” critically (Lago & Smith, 2010). One area where it develops the literature is in acknowledging multiple identities. Moodley and Murphy (2010) draw attention to the tendency of human beings to label and categorise, and the implications that this may have. Referring to dimensions of “difference”, and the research which looks into them in a monocular perspective, it is highlighted that this can be problematic as there is great intersectionality and

convergence within these “differences”, and because in using these dimensions of “difference” and recognising they are embedded in ideologies and dominant culture hegemony, this allows cultural bias to be introduced into the therapeutic relationship. Although this is arguably inevitable, it is important that it is thought about and the deep commitment to anti-oppressive practice is made and interwoven into the foundations of what Moodley (2007) proposes is a critical multicultural and diversity psychotherapy.

## **2.9 HOW THIS RESEARCH AIMS TO CONTRIBUTE TO COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY**

From the literature that has been reviewed we are able to see where deconstruction and postmodernism has begun to generate creative ways of exploring notions of “difference”, differently. For counselling psychology it is important to engage with the ethos and underpinnings of the discipline as a guide to how best we can explore notions of “difference” and where we can challenge current practice. By acknowledging theoretical issues and tensions and utilising research findings and literature we are able to create a forum within which to critically evaluate therapeutic practice. Counselling psychology can be seen to have a humanistic value base, as well as drawing upon hermeneutic, postmodern and deconstructive schools of thought to create a discipline which seeks to highlight a relational view (Manafi, 2010). It promotes an understanding of human beings as being dialogical in nature and acknowledges the otherness of the other (Manafi, 2010). This relational framework should allow us to see ourselves and our clients as beings that are in relation to the world and to other people, promote exploration of subjective experience and locate

practice within a social, historical and political context (Manafi, 2010). If this is the case, then the discipline of counselling psychology would be an ideal place to consider creative and resourceful ways of working with “difference”.

The literature, regarding notions of “difference”, is departing from more problematic or pathologising discourses (Burman, 2004). There has been an engagement and questioning of how to look at notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. This leaves this researcher wondering whether an academic movement to postmodern and critical ways of thinking about notions of “difference” has been translated into practice. This is an important question to ask, given the nature of the subject matter it is necessary to contemplate that practitioners may still just be signing up to equal opportunity procedures on the academic level (Marshall, 2004), rather than engaging with the deeper issues. Subsequently, many practitioners may be engaging in a discourse of political correctness, a professional facade, rather than tackling the more disturbing and difficult elements of prejudice, both on the macro level of society and the micro level of our consulting rooms.

Counselling psychology claims to;

...challenge the views of people who pathologise on the basis of such aspects as sexual orientation, disability, class origin or racial identity and religious and spiritual views.

***(Division of Counselling Psychology, 2008, p.8)***

If as practitioners we are committed to this proposition then we must explore how, if at all, we are pathologising the different other. There is a gap in the literature here as there is literature which discusses the new and creative ways put forward to work with “difference”, yet there seems to be no literature about how “differences” are being



worked with and constructed, in counselling psychology in the UK (Moller, 2011). Therefore, this research proposes that a crucial part of challenging the views of those who pathologise against difference would be study into how we as trainees and counselling psychologists construct notions of “difference”.

Some counselling psychologists within the US believe the identity of counselling psychology in the US was “saved” by “multiculturalism”, as the commitment to diversity allowed them to stand out as different to clinical psychology and allowed critical thinking regarding standardised and medicalised treatments of individuals (Atkinson, Wampold, & Worthington, 2007). There have even been provocative statements that urge the UK to think about diversity, given its shameful lack of engagement with issues of “difference” (Moller, 2011). There has been a call in the literature for anti-oppressive practice to permeate research and practice on a deeper level (Burman, 2004; Lago & Smith, 2010; Moller, 2011). This research aims to address the gap in the literature, which calls for critical thought and engagement on how notions of “difference” are constructed. The starting place for this is to examine what discourses are currently present in counselling psychology in Britain. If the literature tells us that we can construct notions of “difference” through the language used, then it is important to explore what constructions are prevalent in the discipline of counselling psychology, and the implications of such constructions. It seems that in order to ensure anti-oppressive practice we must be thoughtful and reflective regarding the language used, and the notions of “difference” we construct.

This research proposes that one way to do this is to take a discourse analytic stance. With its postmodern roots, discourse analysis will provide a lens through which to examine the constructions of notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. The

aims of this research would then be to explore notions of “difference” and the subsequent discourses in counselling psychology, as well as whether the notions of “difference” discussed in the literature are those that really make an impact in counselling psychology practice. Eight trainee counselling psychologists and counselling psychologists would be interviewed about notions of “difference” in their practice. The interviews would be transcribed and analysed, exploring the “language in use” as a focus for the study.

The aim here would be to describe and critique the prevalent notions of “difference”, and then explore the implications for subjectivity and experience. Consequently, the questions addressed would include; what discourses are prevalent around notions of “difference” in counselling psychology? How do counselling psychologists’ speak about notions of “difference”? Where does this position them? Do any ideological dilemmas present themselves in this way of speaking? How does this compare to notions of “difference” in the literature? How can notions of “difference” be located, historically, socially and politically, and within the context of counselling psychology?

The objectives of analysing discourses on notions of “difference” in counselling psychology would be, to examine the presenting discourses, and how language conveys these discourses, and what social realities are constructed. This could lead us to whether counselling psychology as a discipline would like to challenge, or change, the discourses around notions of “difference” and whether we could, or should, think differently about “difference”. How this will be conducted, both practically and theoretically, are discussed in the following chapters.



## **3 Methodology**

### **3.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter outlines the organising principles underlying the study of notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. It explores what it means to this researcher to be engaging with research within the discipline of counselling psychology and the tenets of a practitioner doctorate within the field. It explains the epistemological and ontological background to the study and why a critical discursive psychology method was chosen. Firstly, this chapter examines counselling psychology and its relationship to research. It explicates the chosen discourse analytic methodology and its suitability in contributing to the counselling psychology knowledge base. It also presents an overview of the researcher’s positioning.

### **3.2 COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY AND RESEARCH**

Counselling psychology has been argued to concern itself with the subjective, with an appreciation of the complexity of “difference” and with a focus on wellbeing (Rafalin, 2010). The humanistic underpinnings of counselling psychology allow the discipline to value the search for understanding rather than of overarching and universal truths (Rafalin, 2010). It is important in doing research within a counselling psychology practitioner doctorate to examine the relationship that counselling psychology has with research. The current climate of therapeutic research could be argued to promote and prioritise so called “evidence based practice”, which has led to the increase in popularity of cognitive behavioural therapies (Gilbert & Leahy, 2007). Cognitive behavioural therapies have empirically proved their efficacy from within a

positivistic epistemology (Gilbert & Leahy, 2007). This has been well received by the government and the National Health Service, as there is increasing demand within this discourse for “evidence based practice” (Gilbert & Leahy, 2007). Within this climate it has been argued that as counselling psychologists it is important to review our mission and our relationship to research. This study supports the notion that the aim of research and practice should be to support clients in working toward changes that they want, valuing their individual “differences”, and appreciating the subjectivity and unique experiences of the individual (Rafalin, 2010). Various debates and tensions arise in implementing this mission and it is important to explore and examine them.

The first tension within counselling psychology appears to be the juxtaposition of modern and postmodern epistemologies. The existential, phenomenological and humanistic underpinnings of counselling psychology contrasts counselling psychology’s positivistic roots and the legacy of its foundations in modernist psychology. Any tensions that arise must be held by each practitioner-researcher in exploring their own epistemologies and therapeutic work. Given this standpoint, counselling psychology has been seen to adopt a pluralistic standpoint (McAteer, 2010). Pluralism has been argued to be a tenet of the postmodern epistemology, whereby it can be argued that there is not one overarching truth by which to explicate everything (McAteer, 2010). It puts forward the notion that there is a need to acknowledge that we live in a world of multiplicity of people, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and claims to truth and the validity of these competing perspectives (McAteer, 2010).

When postmodernism rose in response to modernity it highlighted the multiple answers to questions that were influenced by many personal, political, cultural, linguistic and social factors. The pluralistic standpoint adopted in counselling

psychology and in this research, values diversity of perspectives (Cooper, 2009). This is evident in the wide variety of perspectives brought by clients to therapy. It is also evidenced in the diversity of research and in counselling psychological contributions to mental health services and policy (McAteer, 2010). This allows us to hold the tension between the modern and the postmodern influences of counselling psychology. It allows an appreciation of the foundations of psychological research from within modernity whilst also allowing a postmodern positioning, for example in this study, in order to illuminate our understanding of a given area. The aspiration is that multiple perspectives may provide new insights which would enable the appreciation of “differences” and open up debate, rather than enforcing a purist approach to truth and understanding.

### **3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

The aim of qualitative research has been argued to be assisting in developing an understanding of how the world is constructed (McLeod, 2001). This notion of the world we live in being constructed implies that we inhabit a social, personal and relational world that is both complex and layered and may be understood from a pluralistic perspective (McLeod, 2001). Social reality can be seen as multiply constructed. Constructing social reality through language is the focus of this study which analyses language in use and explores how reality is constructed. It does this through a process of careful and rigorous enquiry (McLeod, 2001). In order to arrive at an appropriate method for this, this researcher explored several methodologies and was drawn to the methodology of discourse analytic studies. Given that discourse analysis has been called the “closest to offering a research method in a postmodern

world” (Taylor & Loewenthal, 2007, p.43), it was decided that this would provide new insights into the linguistic constructions of “difference” by practitioners. Discourse analysis is not a unified approach and in order for this study to be a careful and rigorous method of enquiry, this researcher needs to classify any assumptions regarding social constructionism, and the definitions of text and language (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). Also needed is a discussion of the micro and macro levels at which discourse is manifested and the conceptual tools used to access them and this leads to the specific questions and content to be studied (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). These conceptual tools will be explored further in the method chapter (p68).

### **3.4 EPISTEMOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION**

The epistemology of research is the philosophy and theory of knowledge from which it originates (Willig, 2001). The pluralistic turn of counselling psychology opens up a range of theories and acknowledges the multiplicity of knowledge. This research utilises social constructionist epistemologies to illuminate the subject matter. Social constructionism is an approach from within the social sciences which does not have a unified definition that would do justice to the many viewpoints that reside under this umbrella term (Burr, 2003). Social constructionism has been argued to draw attention to how human experience and perception is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically (Willig, 2001). Burr (2003) highlights some of the fundamental tenets of social constructionism: taking a critical stance toward taken for granted knowledge, the importance of historical and cultural specificity, the notion that knowledge is sustained by social processes and that knowledge and social action go together. This research acknowledges this and subscribes to this epistemology. Subsequently, this

research is concerned with identifying the various ways of constructing social reality through discourse and exploring conditions of its use. It then seeks to trace the implications for both human experience and social practice. Within psychology, it can be seen that social constructionism and discourse analysis have allowed for a critical examination of psychological categories (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

In the 1950's there was a turn to language within psychology and in increased interest in the notion that language was a social performance (Willig, 2001). The idea that language described reality was questioned and language became seen to construct different versions of social reality, highlighting its productive potential (Willig, 2001). By the 1970's language's potential as a challenge to cognitivism was recognised. The challenge to cognitivism and the foundations of traditional psychology was that talk may not be the root to cognition but rather a form of social action (Willig, 2001). Therefore, talk was not considered to be based on perception but seen as interpretations constructed by language. This constituted meaning as both constructed and negotiated. This challenged objective perceptions of reality and the idea of fixed cognitive structures and consensual objects of thought (Willig, 2001).

### **3.5 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS; A TWIN FOCUS**

Discourse analysis came out of this movement pioneered by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) and Potter and Wetherell (1987). Two major branches of discourse analysis were borne out of this: discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edwards & Potter, 1992) and critical or Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Parker, 1992). The former traditionally concentrates on how people use discursive strategies to achieve interpersonal objectives in a social interaction whereas the latter focuses on ways of



being which are available to people (Willig, 2001). The distinction between the two originates from the epistemological differences between them. However, it has been noted that a binary system of distinction between the two should not be used. It has been argued that the analysis of discursive practices and discursive resources is needed in twin focus (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Wetherell has debated the division of labour within discourse and states that this can be counterproductive (1998).

Qualitative design allows a critique of the traditional positivist and empiricist epistemologies and focuses more upon the lived experience of participants (Willig, 2001). This study will be conducted as discourse analytic research. Foucault (1979) suggests that the products of a culturally shared discourse are: a sense of identity, ideas, expectations and thought and feelings, implicating the importance of discourse. Discourse Analytic research is not in itself a method but is more an approach that contains many different research activities and types of data (Taylor, 2003). The collective focus that unites the field of research is the study of "language in use". There are two major branches within the field (Willig, 2001) and it is the discursive psychological branch that will be utilised primarily in this study, however, the distinction between the two will be blurred and a critique of the polarisation within discourse analysis is made.

Originated by Potter and Wetherall (1987) the discursive psychological branch of discourse analysis will be the basis of the study, although a "critical discursive psychology" will be used, as proposed by Wetherall (1998) and supported by Edley (2003). This form of critical discursive psychology places language at centre stage, looking at it not solely as a resource for information, but the topic. Hence, it shall be utilised to look at how language is used to construct notions of "difference".

Counselling psychologists will be asked to talk about notions of “difference” and in that discourse critical discursive analysis will aim to seek out what is happening. Resting on the idea that when people recall an event or express an attitude they do more than just retrieve stock information, an account is produced that is highly context specific (Edley, 2003). There will be a variety of social processes and realities in the different forms of talk and this is the action orientation of people’s discourses (Edley, 2003). This will be an area for analysis as this allows us to explore how notions of “difference” are constructed by counselling psychologists on a micro level. Illuminating the prevalent constructions then allows us to describe and critique them. If this is explored in relation to the underpinnings of the discipline and the implications of the constructions used, then critical thinking and debate can be encouraged. The aim in facilitating such discussion is that it allows counselling psychology as a discipline to define and construct the best way of working with “differences”. It could also potentially make a contribution to the future identity of counselling psychology and its commitment to anti-oppressive practice. Finally, it would also contribute to the body of literature which looks at discourse analysis and its contribution to counselling psychological research, and in particular the utility of a twin focus in using a critical discursive psychology.

Action orientation is the primary area of focus yet critical discursive psychology assumes that all sequences will also be embedded within a historical context (Edley, 2003). Consequently, the constructions of practitioners will also be seen as embedded in a wider context and this attends to the macro level of discourse. One criticism of discursive psychology is that it ignores the wider social context, limiting its focus to the language used in a particular context and a particular time (Willig, 2001). Critical

discourse analysis is also criticised for having a narrowed focus and a synthesis of the two branches of discourse has been proposed by Wetherall (1998). Wetherall promotes a twin focus in discourse analysis where both discursive practices and resources are looked at. Edley (2003) has utilised this approach to look at notions of masculinity. Given counselling psychology's attitude and move towards pluralism, arguably research from within the discipline using discourse analysis would be a pertinent place to explore the utility of a twin focus. Wetherell and Edley (1999) use this approach in their study which draws on the threads between the competing theoretical camps. They argue that the division of labour have been a mistake and that discursive approaches need more of an eclectic base (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). A twin focus supposes that when people speak, their talk reflects not only the local pragmatics of that specific interaction in a conversational context, but also broader patterns in the collective sense making and understandings (Edley, 2003). It would seem there is a great deal of difference in the epistemological underpinnings but also a huge overlap and cross fertilisation (Edley, 2003). Negotiating and holding this tension could therefore be illuminating and a two sided analytic approach could combine insights from both branches. From the discursive branch it would seem necessary and appropriate to take the emphasis on the action orientation of people's talk. Here the focus is the co-constructions constituted intersubjectively between participant and researcher as they display to each other their meanings and understandings of what is going on. The critical or Foucauldian branch emphasises notions of discourse as organised forms of intelligibility in which discourses used may have a history and may illuminate various power relations and positions (Parker, 1992). This will be acknowledged in this study. It will be argued in this thesis that the duality of a synthetic approach to discourse is suited to counselling psychology research due

to its appreciation of pluralistic ideas and for psychology itself as it creates methods that can capture the paradoxical nature of the relationship between discourse and the speaking subject; Billig's (1991) notion that we are both products and producers of discourse.

Using this methodology this study examines both the situated and fluid nature of practitioner's discursive constructions of notions of "difference" and the wider social and institutional frameworks. This means that when people talk about "difference" they will be using a repertoire that has been supplied to them by history and each participant's language culture will provide ways of constructing notions of "difference". Here it can be explored as to whether hegemonic discourses are utilised, and it will be interesting to examine what lexicons are used by participants and whether they reinforce culturally dominant attitudes to "difference". It will also be important to examine who is served by these discursive formulations. The final area for analysis within critical discursive psychology will be the relationship between the various discourses on notions of "difference" and the speaking counselling psychologists. This will be a useful analysis as it will aim to capture the paradox that has been argued to be present in discourse: that we are both products and producers of discourse (Billig, 1991). The analysis of the data elicited will be explored fully within the study but will focus mainly on: interpretive repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. It can be seen to focus on the global strategies of self positioning that counselling psychologists use in discourse, regularities in the sample, and how counselling psychologist construct and negotiate notions of "difference" in counselling psychology.

### **3.6 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND NOTIONS OF “DIFFERENCE”**

Within the counselling psychology domain, research and discourses on “multicultural” counselling have focused on gaining competence to work with those deemed “culturally different” to ourselves (Gillis & Diamond, 2006). Postmodern critiques of this approach to “difference” have targeted what “knowledge” and “competencies” practitioners are meant to be acquiring, where this “knowledge” comes from and a concern that this leads to generalisation and stereotypes of groups of people (Gillis & Diamond, 2006). Further critiques have questioned whether attending to individual “differences”, and acquiring “knowledge” about them is helpful. By creating rigid constructs of “difference” it ignores its multiplicity and complexity (Burman, 2004). Consequently, this study examines the discourses around notions of “difference” looking beyond dichotomous and binary systems of classification and labelling “differences”. It focuses on deconstructing and analysing practitioner’s constructions of notions of “difference” and their implications.

Discourse analysis, influenced by postmodern ideas (Spong, 2009), suggests that people are shaped by and limited by the discourses available to them and so are positioned in, and subject to, discourse. By discourse, this study will refer to the language used to talk about notions of “difference”. This is based on the assumption that the way practitioners speak about notions of “difference” will construct the social reality of “difference” in counselling psychology. By examining the possible discourses on “difference” these constructions are made visible and are therefore open to challenge and changes. This contributes to counselling psychology’s commitment to being a reflective and critical discipline.

By marrying the critiques of traditional “multicultural” perspectives, and the postmodern epistemologies of discourse analysis, this study will aim to put forward a context specific snap shot of possible discourses on notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. The specific type of discourse analysis will be critical discursive psychology, which will focus on the language in use and look at interpretive repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions (Edley, 2003).

Initially this research considered other methodologies. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2003) was considered at length, however, this was unsuitable because phenomenology was not the driving force for epistemology of this research. The draw towards IPA, in honesty, was this researcher’s prior experience with the method and the draw of the popularity of IPA with counselling psychology students in today’s research climate (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011).

The reasons for selecting discourse analysis were firstly its qualitative methodology which allows for a critique of the traditional positivist and empiricist epistemologies and its focus on the lived experience of participants (Willig, 2001). In relation to notions of “difference” this allows for an exploration of notions of “difference” rather than using operationalised models of multicultural competence (Abreu, Gim Chung, & Atkinson, 2000). Discourse analysis is arguably the closest to a postmodern method and seemed most appropriate to this thesis due to the postmodern questioning of previous research literature. This was chosen as it is argued to provide researchers with the opportunity to explore language or text, and to potentially find meaning in the structures and functions of speech (Taylor & Loewenthal, 2007).

The specific approach to research in discourse analysis was then debated by the researcher extensively. Three major areas in discourse were considered: discursive

psychology, critical discourse analysis and conversational analysis. The aims of this research were to look at notions of “difference” in counselling psychology and discourse analysis focuses upon the words people use to describe “difference”, how these words are used and potentially access the underlying reasons for this. This researcher was committed to exploring constructions in the micro and macro context of society, as this tension has often been demonstrated within practice. In order for this to be fully explored utilising a twin focus seemed appropriate and discourse analysis and specifically critical discursive psychology allowed this. Conversational analysis may have also provided rich data and analysis, however, this researcher’s understanding is that it overlaps greatly with discursive psychology but pays little attention to the wider context of conversational resources as highlighted in critical approaches to discourse analysis.

The twin focus of critical discursive psychology will allow description and critique of constructions on a micro level - in the interview situation, and a macro level - in the wider context. Spong (2009) states that discourses analysis can potentially provide a critical lens through which to access and understand counselling psychology as a set of social practices, and explore the implications of this further than we may be currently aware. There is an under representation in counselling services and therapeutic practitioners of various minority groups (Bhugra & Bhui, 1998) whose socially constructed “differences” have been argued to make access and applicability of counselling problematic. Consequently, exploring notions of “difference” may afford us with an understanding of why this may be and what role, if any, practitioners’ constructions of “difference” may have.

Discourse analysis is pertinent for this research because it is discourse being analysed not truth (Spong, 2009). In comparing the discourses found in this study with those in the counselling psychology literature, as well as in a historical and socio-political context, we can maintain a healthy scepticism and a critical awareness. This scepticism and critical thinking are the very tools for ensuring anti-oppressive practice. This opens up ways of thinking differently about “difference” as discourse analysis demands that we are more thoughtful about what we say, how we say it and why, which appears to be the heart of the talking therapies.

The theoretical background of the research has now been explicated and the following chapter discusses the practicalities of this research and how it was undertaken.



## **4 Method**

### **4.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter builds upon the previous chapter's methodology, explaining the research method used in this thesis. This study describes and critiques the prevalent notions of "difference" and then explores their implications. Consequently, the questions being addressed include: what discourses are prevalent around notions of "difference" in counselling psychology? How do counselling psychologists' talk about notions of "difference"? Where does this position them? Do any ideological dilemmas present themselves in this talk? How does this compare to notions of "difference" in the literature? How can notions of "difference" be located, historically, socially and politically, and within the context of counselling psychology? This chapter describes how this study addresses these questions and how the research was undertaken.

### **4.2 DISCOURSE ANALYTIC RESEARCH**

Discourse analysis is a wide ranging approach with many conflicting ideas and debates within it. The previous chapter has explicated the epistemological and ontological position of this research. The study places itself in a social constructionist position, and aims to explore the prevalent notions of "difference" in counselling psychology through a critical discursive psychology.

It is important to now clarify several concepts which will underpin the research. The first is that this research asserts that it is through the co-constructions of the researcher and participants that notions of "difference" will be constructed. The co-

constructions of “difference” between counselling psychologists and trainee counselling psychologists in the interview will be analysed. Given the nature of discourse, the discourse analytic researcher may never be objective or extracted from the research (McLeod, 2001). The implications of this mean that all constructions are seen as co-constructed and consequently this researchers input will be analysed as well. It also means that research cannot ever be replicated and the researcher needs to inform the reader of their position and impact on the research (Willig, 2001). This will be done later in this chapter by exploring the researcher’s reflexivity. This will also mean that analyses of the texts, although they will be explicated here, will be interpretations of the researcher at any given time, and so possible truths, rather than definitive truth. This thesis is underpinned by a reflexive account of the research and impact of the researcher as well as any difficulties faced.

Critical discursive psychology will employ a twin focus (Wetherell, 1998), attending to the micro and macro levels of social constructions and applying this to provide a powerful contribution towards understanding constructions of a phenomena (Edley & Wetherell, 1996; 1997; 2003; (Wetherell & Edley, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1998; 1999), in this case of notions of “difference”. Discourse analytic research places language and text at the centre of its analysis. Here, language is given primacy, and semi-structured interviews were recorded, and later transcribed. Transcripts were the texts analysed in this thesis. Three concepts were used in the analysis of these texts; interpretive repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. These are described and explored later in the chapter. The process of carrying out qualitative research may be divided into two broad categories of gathering data and analysing

data (McLeod, 1994). These will be looked at below to explore how the texts used in this research were collated and analysed.

### **4.3 DATA GATHERING**

One method of data gathering is semi-structured interviews. For psychological research, it can be argued that there are no right or wrong methods of data collection, rather those which allow for the research questions to be facilitated (Willig, 2001). In order to gather data for this study, semi-structured interviews were used. They are one of the most common ways to collect data in qualitative psychology and this has been said to be due to their compatibility with several research methods, including discourse analytic research (Willig, 2001). The process involves careful planning on the part of the researcher regarding who to interview, how to recruit participants, how to record and transcribe the interviews, what style of interview they will use and what to ask (Willig, 2001).

Firstly, it is important to justify the use of semi-structured interviews in this thesis. The use of semi-structured interviews have previously been criticised in discourse analysis as only providing a snap shot that is relevant only in specific contexts (Craven & Coyle, 2007). The ideal within discourse analysis is to focus on naturally occurring talk because discourse analysis aims to look at how people negotiate language in real life (Willig, 2001). Within research however, this can cause problems as both ethical and practical constraints mean that it is not feasible or ethical to intrude into language use in real life, for example in therapeutic sessions (Taylor, 2003). Consequently, many analysts have turned to semi-structured interviews and group discussions or focus groups (Taylor, 2003). After reflecting on the implications of both methods of data

collection on the research, this study will generate data from semi-structured interviews, like many other seminal discourse analytic studies (Potter and Wetherall, 1987; Willig, 2001). The justification of this originated during an initial pilot of the interview schedule, in an informal focus group which was conducted with a group of trainee counselling psychologists. It was brought to the attention of the researcher that the nature of the subject matter was thought of as being very personal and several people indicated they would only feel comfortable participating within a confidential interview rather than a focus group. Semi-structured interviews were then chosen for this research. This decision was further validated by the sensitive nature of counselling psychologist practice and their ability to talk about confidential client material, as well as the time constraints of the study. More importantly, one of the main advantages of focus groups has been argued to be that they allow free naturally occurring speech regarding a topic between professionals. The interviews attempted to recreate this as it is a discussion between two professionals within the discipline of counselling psychology. An advantage of these interviews is also that it avoids speech orienting itself to group dynamics rather than the topic at hand (Taylor, 2003). The utility of groups for data collection will be recognised in this study and subsequently informal peer focus groups were used to pilot the interview schedule. It will also be important to recognise and consider how and if participants orient themselves to the research interview situation and for the research to remain highly reflexive and analyse both interviewer and participant's comments. Semi-structured interviews have an interview agenda to allow for sensitive and ethical negotiation of data gathering (Willig, 2001). This is discussed later in this chapter. The data itself is the text in the transcripts of interviews.

#### **4.4 PARTICIPANTS**

There were eight participants in the study. Within the purposive sample the inclusion criterion was that participants are enrolled on the British Psychological Society register of Chartered Counselling Psychologists or conditionally registered as Trainee Counselling Psychologists. Once approached regarding participation, the first eight suitable applicants were recruited (details of recruitment can be found on p. 63).

Due to the discourse analytic nature of the study, the inclusion criterion was thus and did not extend into demographics or amount of time in training or practicing. The length of time or experience of participants was not used as criteria for inclusion as this researcher wanted to allow for the contribution of those practicing under the umbrella of counselling psychology, regardless of the amount of experience. Also due to the co-constructed nature of these interviews, and the researcher being a trainee, it seemed unnecessary to impose such criteria. Rather, the focus of the selection of participants' was on those who were registered, conditionally or otherwise, with the British Psychological Society as Counselling Psychologists or Trainee's, constructing and identifying themselves as practicing clinically within the profession. One could argue here, and this was something that the researcher deliberated, was the notion that counselling psychology was a social category, or a way of constructing an identity within psychological therapies. Therefore, various different meanings could be ascribed to it. However, this tension between deconstructing and exploring indices of identity, and being subject to using language to name that which will be researched, was one that needed to be negotiated. This research identified those who applied to be registered with the British Psychological Society, conditionally or otherwise, and

label themselves as practicing counselling psychology are attributing themselves to that identity and contribute to the identity construction of counselling psychology.

Demographic information regarding the participants will only be included in analysis if necessary or referred to during the interviews. It was not elicited in a standard manner, as is typical of psychological research. This was due to the discourse analytic nature of the research, as this was not deemed appropriate (Willig, 2001). This study rests upon the notion that such information (for example “gender”, “age”, and “ethnicity”) are ways in which people can construct their identities and consequently, such detailed information from the outset would suggest that these categories may capture something regarding the essence of participants, rather than allowing them to construct their own “differences” in ways that are their own and can be analysed within research. As discourse analysis is about exploring the constructions of social reality in particular situations through use of language, it would seem inappropriate to impose categories included due to the researchers own interest. However, a description of my own “differences” and any participant “differences” constructed in the interview will be mentioned during analysis where appropriate, particularly when used by participants to construct their identity. Participants were invited to describe themselves demographically. For the reader, participant’s descriptions of their “differences” are appended. If during analysis the reader would like more information regarding the participants description of them demographically, it is included. However, this researcher would invite the reader to question why they require this information, and how such demographic information would enhance their reading of the thesis. In other words, I would invite the reader to question their own constructions of “difference”.

#### **4.5 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND STYLE**

An interview schedule was used to guide and negotiate the data collection (Willig, 2001). It consisted of the following question;

- Can you tell me about notions of “difference” in your counselling psychology practice?

Using one broad question here allowed participants to say what they wanted about notions of “difference” in counselling psychology and kept the interview as open as possible in the hope of eliciting enough data for the study. The aim was that participants would say as much as they want, and can, about notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. They were prompted by the use of conversational elements such as “Can you tell me more about that?”, “Can you tell me if that had an effect, if at all?” (Taylor and Loewenthal, 2007). This interview schedule was designed and piloted to informal peer focus groups so that it could be refined as necessary and used as a guide. Following said groups, it was deemed appropriate as a schedule. The interview style aimed to be facilitative and participants were made to feel comfortable and were asked to say as much or as little as they like about notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. Participants were prompted where deemed necessary in a facilitative, explorative and naively curious stance. The interview style sought not to be challenging or leading, although this was difficult on the behalf of the interviewer. In order to honour the notion of co-construction and to critique whether the researcher was leading, both the comments of the researcher and participants will need to be analysed (Willig, 2001).

Other materials such as information sheets, briefing and de-briefing sheets, informed consent and ethical approval were also utilised and are appended. A British Psychological Society advert and emails to potential participants were used to contact registered counselling psychologists, and conditionally registered trainees, with regard to the nature of the research. The first eight participants to respond were then recruited in the first instance. As mentioned above, limited demographic information was elicited but not demanded, as is not deemed appropriate in discourse analytic studies (Willig, 2001). This is specifically pertinent in this research which aims to examine the categorisation of demographics, their meanings and constructions. This will be used in the thesis if necessary in the analysis chapter. Written consent for the interview, recording, and transcribing was asked for, and password protection of all data was offered. Participants were made aware that they may withdraw from the study at any time. Transcripts were made available before analysis for participants to ensure an accurate depiction of their experience was attained. All participants were briefed and debriefed as to the nature of the study with transparency. Interviews took place at participants' convenience, in their places of work or at the university they attended and were typically 45-65 minutes long.

#### **4.6 PILOT WORK**

A pilot interview was carried out using the method described above and sufficient data was elicited in an ethical and functional way. The interview procedure and schedule were deemed appropriate and sufficient and therefore the pilot was used within the analysis of transcripts.



## 4.7 ETHICS

Ethical considerations were made and this research adhered to the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2006) and institutional ethics boards. Prior to the research commencing, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant ethic committees. All data is anonymous except to the researcher and any specific identifying information about individuals or therapy has been omitted (McLeod, 1994). Interview and transcriptions will be anonymous to all but the researcher and kept according to data protection law. Written consent will be required and completed transcripts will be made available to participants to alter if they do not believe it to be an accurate depiction of their experience. It has been made explicit that participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Pseudonyms were used in the presentation of analysis. The researcher, having mentioned the work of Levinas (1969), would like to note the emphasis of this on the researcher's ethics and notions of "the other". This has had a great impact on the researcher and subsequently, this research. The researcher felt throughout the data collection and analysis that it was important to maintain ethical responsibility to the other and hopes that this principle is echoed throughout the thesis. In particular for this research, this meant ensuring that throughout the research my presence was reflected upon and my reflexivity acknowledged. This also meant acknowledging notions of power regarding the researcher's position and participant's subject positions. During interviews an effort was made to allow participants to be facilitated in what they wanted to say without judgement. During debriefing participants rights were explicated further in detail including the right to withdraw, to allow them to feel in control and to not feel exposed or vulnerable. During the analysis of data and writing-up phase of research,

ethical responsibility and respect to participants have been fundamental to this researcher.

#### **4.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data was collected in the form of taped interviews and they were then transcribed fully. The transcription notation is that of Wetherell and Edley (1999) (see appendices, appendix V). They were then analysed using critical discursive psychology. The exact coding paradigm and method of analysis was based on the ten stage model used by Potter and Wetherall (1987), but with an attempt to locate findings in the wider context as proposed by Wetherall (1998) and Edley (2003). The ten stage model is;

- Stage One; Research questions
- Stage Two; Sample selection
- Stage Three; Collection of records and documents
- Stage Four; Interviews
- Stage Five; Transcription. Intermission.
- Stage Six; Coding
- Stage Seven; Analysis
- Stage Eight; Validation
  - a) Coherence
  - b) Participants orientation
  - c) New problems
  - d) Fruitfulness
- Stage Nine; The report

- Stage Ten; Application

Utilising a staged model in discourse analytic research may be seen as a modernist contradiction. However, Potter and Wetherell (1987) advocate this is taken solely as a guide not to be followed rigidly. It was therefore used as an aid rather than definitive steps for the research. In reflection, the guide provided direction which enabled a containment of the anxiety evoked in the researcher whilst undertaking this project. Although it was used in a very loose capacity it prevented a framework to hang ideas upon and a sequential guide as to how and where to move the research on.

The data was analysed using a critical discursive psychology. Interviews were transcribed with the transcription notion used by Wetherell and Edley (1999), where gestures and intonation was noted, as well as pauses (see appendices, appendix V). Once transcription was complete analysis began. Firstly, transcripts were read and then re-read. Coding followed, which involved the selection of sections of data which referred directly and indirectly to notions of “difference” for analysis. The need for coding shows that there is never a complete analysis of a text and that the text can be analysed again for further insights (Willig, 2001). The coded sections are related to the research questions within this study. Once the coded sections were collated, analysis continued. This part of analysis of data, in line with the work of Potter and Wetherall (1987), was conducted in three major phases. In the initial phases of reading and re-reading the text was repeated. This was followed by searching within the data for consistencies, inconsistencies and internal contradictions in the data. Then began a second phase whereby the data was searched for regular patterns of variability of accounts in the transcripts. Any repeatedly occurring descriptions, explanations,

arguments and basic assumptions were identified. In the final stage, it became apparent one could identify basic assumptions and starting points underlying various ways of talking about notions of “difference”. Subsequently, a master list of repertoires was created which formed the basis for the following chapter’s presentation of the analysis. Analysis went back and forth in this process until this researcher believed she had assembled all that had been said about notions of “difference” within the data.

#### **4.8.2 THREE KEY CONCEPTS**

Of the discursive practices and resources explored the method chosen seemed the most apt in describing and critiquing the prevalent notions of “difference”. This was done by concentrating on interpretive repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions (Edley, 2003);

Interpretive Repertoires;

They refer to ways in which people construct or talk about the subject in question and were originally used in a study of ways of constructing scientific activity (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984). This notion was expanded upon by Potter and Wetherell (1987), who describe interpretive repertoires as a collection of terms or metaphors which may be drawn upon to characterise, describe or even evaluate a subject. The main point to note here is that they are the relatively coherent ways one can talk about various notions of “difference”. Although this gives a sense of what they are theoretically, the difficulty can often be locating them within data (Edley, 2003). Unfortunately, there are no definitive rules when it comes to discourse analysis. Repertoires are derived from hunches based on the researcher’s relationship to the data, and some maybe

need to be abandoned and revised (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). It is proposed that searching for these repertoires is a skill and one will come to recognise the patterns in talk and one will hopefully aim to gain an indication of having encountered what can be said about a subject (Edley, 2003). This is the sense that this researcher gained over a long period of analysing and transcripts. This was an intense and anxiety provoking time and several repertoires were abandoned and revised. This culminated in the content of the next chapter and these discursive practices were used to address the research questions.

#### Ideological Dilemma's;

Ideological dilemma's were first referred to by Billig et al (1988), and it discussed the idea of there being a conceptual distinction between intellectual ideologies, those with are integrated and coherent sets of ideas, and what was referred to as "lived" ideologies (Edley 2003). These are composed of the beliefs, values and practices of a given society or culture (Edley, 2003) and are its way of life, or common sense. Unlike, the traditional form of ideology, these are said to be characterised by inconsistency and fragmentation. Billig et al (1988), highlighted that these lived ideologies can often conflict, but can make a contribution to studying social interaction (Edley, 2003). Any such dilemmas presented in the text were presented within the analysis.

#### Subject Positions;

Subject positions have a relatively established history within qualitative research, particularly in cultural studies and social psychology (Edley, 2003). We are referring in this case to Althusser's definition (1971 as cited in Edley, 2003) that shows how the use of ideology pulls us into various positions and creates us as subjects. This will then

have an impact on power and any such positioning was described and critiqued in the next chapter. Edley (2003) states that subject positions are 'locations' within a conversation and that when analysing data they emerge when we consider who is implied by a particular repertoire. These will be included should they become apparent in analysis.

#### **4.9 REFLEXIVITY**

Due to the nature of discourse analysis, the importance of reflexivity and my impact on data collection and analysis needs to be explored fully (Taylor, 2003). Within qualitative research objective neutrality on behalf of the researcher is impossible, as the researcher and the research cannot be meaningfully separated (Taylor, 2003). Reflexivity, the notion of how the researcher impacts on the world and the world impacts the researcher, is then of utmost importance, as is self-awareness (Taylor, 2003). This includes the need to transparently consider the relevance of a researcher's identity, personal interests and beliefs, especially in relation to the chosen topic of research and impact of the researcher on the co-constructed interviews, and then interpretations used to create an analysis of the text (Taylor, 2003).

Looking first at the identity of the researcher, it is important to note that I am a female, British Asian, 26 years of age, heterosexual, married, middle class and able, and that this may impact on the interview regarding notions of "difference", by influencing my own position, power dynamics and the interpretations that I make. This will be discussed further during analysis and discussion.

My impact on the research will be vast, as is the way with qualitative research. Therefore, I have written this section of the thesis to explicate my thoughts and

feelings so that the reader may transparently know my positioning and beliefs with regard to the research. The aim here is to allow for a greater understanding as to why the topic was selected, what my thoughts and feelings were regarding this and how this may impact the interviews, my interpretations and the analysis. It invites the reader to explore my constructions of “difference”, and my own identity and positions.

I believe that when engaging in therapeutic relationships, as therapist or client, the notion of “difference” has always been at play. Maybe that is due to my minority positioning as an Asian British female, and the impact that the intersectionality has had upon my life. When engaging in therapy, I expect the person before me to be different to me. More often than not in my practice, given the services that I work in, I see white, heterosexual, able women. When I engage in these relationships, I have a fear of the other seeing my skin colour first. The impact that this “difference” has upon people is something that I am alert to, and I am willing to concede, maybe at times over sensitive too. But it also opens the door to thinking differently about “difference”. On thinking about the racial “differences” between me and my clients, I begin to think about other “differences”, from age, to ethnicity, sexuality to disability. Not just to think about these as a checklist of possible “differences” or tick boxes on an equal opportunities form. Rather, to think about what it means for clients to see themselves or be seen as Asian, bisexual, elderly or disabled or any combination of these “differences”. I have gone on to think about what these “differences” mean to me and my clients and where this places us in a wider social context. I assumed that this engagement with notions of “difference” was the norm. What shocked me during my training was how little many practitioners thought about “difference” and diversity. I was surprised by how little minority groups were represented on courses, in training

and in placements. I was also shocked at how often patriarchal, heterosexual assumptions were made in lectures and supervision groups. It would seem that it is easy to tag cultural sensitivity onto the main points of a lecture or a module rather than engage with “difference” at a deeper level. It was from this shocked stance that I was inspired to make this the subject of my doctoral research.

This section of this thesis contains a passionate explication of my thoughts and feelings regarding the subject. Having included this within my thesis, I hope that my agenda is explicated and the reader feels they may take what they can from this work, knowing how and why my interpretations are what they are, and the inspirations for the choice of topic to be researched. Given that in qualitative work the researcher may never be objective or distanced from the research, this seems both important and necessary. My reflexive commentary echoes throughout the thesis but is explored again in detail in the concluding thesis chapter.

This chapter has endeavoured to clarify how the research was carried out. What it has done is given the reader an understanding, in detail, of the processes of data gathering and analysis of data. In the following chapter, the analysed data will be presented.





## 5 Analysis – Description of Findings

### **5.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Having described the processes of data gathering and analysis in the previous chapter, this chapter presents the analysis of the interview data elicited. The data is presented under headings and subheadings which represent the interpretive repertoires that this researcher has encountered during the analysis phase of this research. It also includes any ideological dilemmas or subject positions that became apparent. These are demonstrated using extracts from the transcripts of the tape-recorded interviews. These extracts and their analysis are explicated to guide the reader through this researcher's findings. They are discussed fully in the following chapter.

As suggested by Willig (2001) the structure of this section will reflect both the research questions and the emphasis of analysis. Analysis of the data was able to meet the aim of this thesis by describing and critiquing the prevalent notions of "difference" and examining how they are constructed and negotiated through discourse. What follows is the researchers attempt to make sense of patterns in the ways participants spoke about notions of "difference". It is important to note that it is one reading and interpretation made by this researcher over a period of time and that repertoires are interpretive. The researcher's reflexivity allows for an acknowledgement that the constructions of "difference" presented here were co-constructed between participants and this researcher. Analyses and their interpretations were constructed by the researcher who recognises that the same data may be read in many different ways providing different versions of the truth. This process and the implications of these notions of "difference" and their constructions are discussed in the next chapter.

The interpretive repertoires presented below are grouped under several over-arching themes. The first construction of “difference” alludes to the origins of “differences”. The next theme encapsulates repertoires which construct the various dimensions of “difference”. The chapter goes on to look at the positive and pathological constructions of “difference” under the heading the good, the bad and the ugly. This then leads the reader to constructions which overlap with notions of “power” and “prejudice”. Finally, the chapter addresses constructions of “difference” with regards to counselling psychology and its identity.

## **5.2 Origins of “Differences”**

### **5.2.1 “Differences” as essential versus “Differences” as socially constructed**

The first repertoires presented here concern themselves with questions regarding the origins of “differences”. In counselling psychologists’ discourse about notions of “difference” they highlighted the debate as to whether “differences” were innate and essential structures or social constructions. Arguments concerning the influence of nature versus the influence of social factors are prevalent in many arenas. In counselling psychology discourse, constructions of “differences” as having a natural cause or being socially constructed were present in most of the interview transcripts. Participants drew upon both repertoires at different times. At times ideological dilemmas presented themselves as participants would juxtapose a repertoire regarding essential “differences” with one of socially constructed “difference”. Below is an extract from an interview with a participant.

#### **Extract 1 (Violet, lines 65-78)**

**(Men)... seem to be more pragmatic or black and white in their thinking, and erm, ..., errrr, more...errrr, sort of...needing to put on a show of strength, which women don't necessarily need to do. I think a woman can relax more in the company of another woman, say a woman counsellor and, um, feel...feel it's easier to be vulnerable, to cry, to express her feelings, where I think men, working with a woman counsellor would find it all so difficult in the sense that they, they don't-I mean this one male client I had found it incredibly difficult and almost shameful to, to show his pain, or any expression of intense emotion like crying, actually both, both of the men I have worked with have found that difficult. And maybe they would have found that easier with a man, or you know, just because they believe that men need to be strong and need not show emotion.**

What can be seen in the extract above is that the participant draws upon two ideologically contrasting notions of "difference". The participant uses a male and female dichotomy to talk about working with "gender difference". In the extract she alludes to men "thinking" differently from women, highlighting notions that men and women are fundamentally different at a cognitive level. This draws upon discourses which see biology as the basis for human "differences". However, she goes on to employ a contradictory notion, whereby she locates "differences" in the cultural or social domain. She has used both cognitive "differences" and social gender roles and social performance. This extract from within the data can be seen to show how a counselling psychologist constructed a "difference" and tried to explain its origins using both a "differences as essential" repertoire and a "differences as social constructions" repertoire.

### 5.3 Dimensions of “difference”

This section presents repertoires that construct “differences” and explores and attends to how they are constructed.

#### 5.3.1 “Difference” as “monocular”

One construction frequently encountered by the researcher was of participants speaking about “differences” as single dimensions. “Differences” were constructed in an isolated manner where “differences” like “race”, “sexuality”, “gender” and others were seen as individual facets of identity, usually from what has been termed the “big seven” (Moodley & Lubin, 2008)(see Chapter 2, p20). The notion of a monocular approach to “difference” highlights one aspect of “difference” over another. What is presented in the extracts below is merely a selection of the many examples of this from within the data.

##### **Extract 2 (Eva, lines 46-52)**

**a lot of it [training]<sup>3</sup> was around race, a lot of it was around sexual preference. Those two were the main ones. I think religion is becoming more of an issue, especially in the Islamic world, people covering or not, and ..with more and more people working in the field and being devout muslims and covering for example, it has challenged a lot of people.**

The extract above shows how the participant has referred to separate facets of identity, in this case race and sexuality then religion. She lists the indices of “difference” and speaks of them with no thought of intersectionality.

---

<sup>3</sup> [] indicated that words have been added for ease of reading in typographic representation.

### **Extract 3 (Violet, lines 287-296)**

**I had one client who was a gay woman and was involved in a very promiscuous scene and it was very different to my experience and in a funny way, I felt like I was being introduced to a world that I didn't know and that was being talked about. But it didn't get in the way, you know, she had an experience that had hurt her in some way when her parents divorced, um, and I identified with how painful that must have been. She'd had the break up of a relationship and I know how painful it is to have the breakup of a relationship. I didn't feel any of it got in the way.**

A monocular construction can be seen above and the participant reconstructs her experience of working with a gay woman in therapy whose parents' have divorced and whose own relationship had broken down. The participant constructs several notions of similarity or aspects of this women's experience which she can relate to. This participant recognises the "difference" in their sexualities although it is difficult to know if she is referring to the woman being "gay" or the promiscuous scene she was involved in or both. She goes on to construct the notion that the similarities between them allowed them to work together and "it", potentially the "difference" in sexuality, did not get in the way. Here it would seem that that the participant still recognises and constructs one specific dimension of "difference" that is different to her.

### **5.3.2 "Difference" and "race"**

Of all the monocular constructions of "difference" within the data, the one that was mentioned most frequently was "race". The researcher found that both during the interviews and during analysis, "race" was discussed recurrently. This could be seen as surprising as literature has often explored the notions that "race" is perhaps a

“difference” that is not often talked about (Lofthouse, 2010). However, it may be due to the co-constructed nature of the interview and the impact of the researcher. One of the participants interviewed identified themselves as a British Asian though with no more specificity. The rest of the participants described themselves as white British, white European or white other. This researcher would construct part of her identity as a British Asian born in the UK with a cultural heritage in Pakistan and subsequently I would argue that this impacted the interviews. The ways in which this affected the co-constructions will be described next.

**Extract 4 (Zoe, Lines 167-173)**

**I’m just trying to relate it back to this, the guy, who there was such an obvious difference between us, and was basically, and he, he’d say ‘you’ll never understand-’ [sounds annoyed] This always comes up, ‘oh you’ll never understand me, you’ve never had this experience of difference’, ‘you haven’t been in hospital’, ‘you, you’re not black’, ‘you’re not this, that’, and..um yeah, I suppose that puts me a bit on the defensive almost.**

In this extract “race” is constructed as an “obvious difference”. The participant recalls experience of working with a “black” client drawing on a repertoire that locates and reifies racial “difference” as obvious. It is important to note here there is much debate as to the significance of racial categories (Lofthouse, 2010) and it can be acknowledged that “race” as a concept is tenuous. Therefore, one question here for social constructionists is what are the signifiers of “difference”, specifically racial “difference”, and how do they manifest? This will be explored further in the following chapter. It is also important to note that this participant worked with those with diagnosed mental health problems in an acute psychiatric facility. Therefore, it is

interesting to note that she speaks of a black client with mental health problems, yet it is unclear as to whether she recognises the intersectionality or if her clients are unified by a similarity of mental health problems, and “race” here is the constructed difference.

Perhaps it is because of this notion of “race” being “obvious” that constructions which positioned the researcher as the racial other were employed. As a British Asian of Pakistani descent perhaps in talking about “race” some participants felt they were naming something in the interview situation and orienting themselves to that. However, only two of the participants addressed the researcher as the racial other explicitly. One example is presented below:

**Extract 5 (Barbara, lines 59-70)**

**P: ...the other thing of course, that I um, that I used to do a great deal more of is to, highlight difference of race, like from your first name, I assumed that you were from somewhere-**

**I: I am British Asian.**

**P: Yes, some Asian, some Asian background yeah, but I am not too proficient in regard to where that might come from, it sounds like an Arabic name to me.**

**I: Yeah, it is.**

**P: I thought it might be, ok, so, um, if I saw you as a client, a, I'd also find out about your background and then at some point I might ask you 'so what's it like to work with me?'**



The participant constructs a desire to highlight the perceived racial “difference” between us. She chooses what she sees as a signifier of racial “difference”, in this case my name, as a reason for recognising the “difference”. The participant tentatively addresses linguistics and the origin of my name rather than any other signifier of “difference”. As my first name is Arabic it would seem that the participant is alluding to a “difference”. However, it seemed to this researcher as though the participant wanted to refer to skin colour or racial categorisation but felt unable so was referring to a more general “cultural difference”. Arguably then, “race” could be seen here as being used synonymously with notions of “culture”, language, and “ethnicity” and to address a “difference” in the room. The participant then states that in her clinical work she would ask me, as the different other, what it is like to work with her. It is uncertain as to what “difference” she is now referring to, or whether she means any “difference”. It is important here to look at how appropriate this direct challenge would be in clinical work as it appears to assume a certain power and position over the client. However, it can also be noted the participant may be orientating to the interview situation and seeing either herself in a majority position as more “powerful” than myself a minority. Or it could be that the participant was orientating and discursively negotiating the power dynamics in the interview situation where the participant may have felt she had less power than the researcher.

When that “racial difference” was constructed it was subsumed into notions of “culture” and “ethnicity”. This was a common repertoire that utilised these words as synonyms. This is demonstrated in extract eight also.

**Extract 6 (Claire, lines 314-330)**

you know I would say the racial differences between um..cultural difference, religious difference whatever, um..doesn't so much, it impacts the work maybe in terms of you know, a girl said to me the other day, she was from Afghanistan and she said oh we wrote a song for my nan, but it is in my language, and at those points I will come to the session and say why don't you translate it, but then again I had a a fleeting thought it will get lost in translation anyway, and that, I guess things like that things of in terms of um, it doesn't strike me, it doesn't feel so, I'm aware in terms of when someone will say something in terms of their culture and I'm like, oh that is really different to mine, or I'm not familiar with that but it doesn't feel like an obstacle between us, it just feel like something I am not familiar with so yeah, it and you know, I wonder if it impacts have had the work more for them 'cause maybe they are like kind of think, that I am not understanding them or understanding their culture, it is a learning curve I guess, a lot of the girls I have only just started seeing so yeah

Again this linguistic grouping together and assumption that "race", "ethnicity" and "culture" can be grouped together synonymously is something to wonder about. It could have been that when talking about "race" participants did not deem it appropriate to refer directly to skin colour. This could be the case in the context of the interview situation or at a societal level. This may have been due to fears regarding being seen as rude or prejudiced as delineated within the literature (Lofthouse, 2010). This is discussed further in the next chapter.

### **5.3.3 "Difference" as 'binary and dichotomous'**

**Extract 7 (Zoe, lines 113-118)**

**I think, within that hospital setting, in particular, within this setting in particular I think..the notion of difference is so prevalent, is so highlighted, there's sick people and well people and helping them to get better, there is that difference in the room every time**

**Extract 8 (Eva, lines 193-197)**

**here you have white and non white, so anyone not white was in the other category, suddenly got shifted, I don't know, if you like to call the minority, the less desirable whatever, so actually I had to make an interesting shift 'cause that isn't how I grew up, yet I am the one who supposedly had come from the racist society**

A common construction was to assemble "differences" in an either/or dyad. Examples of these constructions such as mental health being categorised as either "sick" or "well" or "race" being "white or non white" can be seen above. In the extracts participants construct "differences" in a dyadic and binary repertoire. It can be argued that this is reductive and does not acknowledge the richness of "difference" and positions people in one group or another, pulling them into a majority or minority position.

#### **5.4 "Difference" – the good, the bad and the ugly**

Presented next are constructions of "difference" where "difference" was positioned as a negative or positive construct. Repertoires which deny notions of "difference" and give preference to notions of "similarity" are also explicated.

#### **5.4.1 “Difference” as ‘pathological and problematic’**

The most common repertoire employed by participants and encountered frequently within the data during analysis was the notion of “difference” being a problem, being pathologised or seen as an obstacle to overcome in therapy. This is characterised by the following extract whereby monocular dimensions of “difference” are seen as obstacles to connecting with the other.

##### **Extract 9 (Violet, lines 46-57)**

**P: ...today in the shop, um, I was talking to a man ... the shop keeper, from a different culture, different age, different gender, um, and there was a moment of connection, so I think that is what I mean, regardless of the externals, you can still find a way of connecting to another human being, and I think that is what I look for in my counselling is, is the ability to connect, regardless of, of difference in, er, gender, race, sexual orientation, anything like that.**

**I: And can you tell me how that search for connection helps you in your practice in regards to difference?**

**P: Um, I’m saying that I put the difference-or I hope I put the differences aside, and look for the connection.**

This construction positions “differences” as something that can block connection with the other or hinder good therapy. This was prevalent in all transcripts. Burman (2003) characterizes this positioning as seeing “differences” as “obstacles on a path to mutual relatedness”. A similar analogy was used to construct this repertoire in the following extract;

**Extract 10 (Zoe, lines 398-406)**

and I think that definitely makes it hard if you feel like that, it does, if that gets in the way. If you always kind of working against that, the differences between you, and trying to find common ground all the time, perhaps, I think that is what comes, actually can happen. You try and find some kind of way of connecting, some way of finding common ground when you're working with difference. When you haven't got so much of that, there's just not perhaps that barrier or hurdle to overcome, there will be other hurdles, but that may not be there.

The notion that "difference" is problematic and pathological may be part of a wider discourse. Marshall (2004) writes of how sameness denotes equality and it is in "differences" that there has historically been more discomfort and difficulty.

**Extract 11 (Eva, lines 335-345)**

my supervisor once said something to me about, I have forgotten how he put it but it was really good though, something along the lines of being able to say anything but then you know, what he was, the kind of learning for me was that if you mention the elephant in the room, that is how he put it, if you mention the elephant in the room, pay attention to how much it may smash the furniture, which I thought was a useful thing, if you open your mouth and say anything that that does make things shaky and that for me was useful to go you know, this is a useful thing, but on the other hand, you need to pay attention to how shaky it may make people

**Extract 12 (Claire, lines 333-339)**

I think working with the differences is essentially learning or them teaching you and then learning and it is a..back and forth relationship um, you know I guess if you are

**working with the differences in therapy, if I was being direct about it I will be saying in terms of almost pointing out the elephant in the room so you know, you're from here, I'm from here, how does that make you feel and doing it in that sense, but I wouldn't say that I work like that**

This repertoire of pathologising “difference” is demonstrated in the employment of the common idiom of there being an “elephant in the room”. This idiom illustrates something being there that has not yet been mentioned and that causes discomfort, but is apparent. In the first extract above, it can be seen that the idiom is used as a cautionary device. That, if you mention “difference” you need to be careful as it could damage the therapeutic relationship. In the next extract the idiom is used as a device to highlight that “difference” is there and will need to be mentioned. The commonality between the two uses of the idiom is that in this construction of “differences”, they are the elephant – the unavoidable issue or problem in the therapy room, that practitioners feel unsure of how to approach.

#### **5.4.2 “Difference” as ‘positive’**

In opposition to seeing “difference” as problematic there was an ideological dilemma present. Some participant’s constructed “difference” as problematic, later reconstructed “differences” as positive.

##### **Extract 13 (Zoe, lines 42-51)**

**it is how people feel about being different. For me, I've always embraced it as being something really positive, and feeling like, I'm special almost. Um, perhaps that helped me just to kind of to survive really, is having that and, er, that kind of**

confidence in being different and that being a good thing, and that, being confident enough to stand out and to make er, make you know even, exaggerate being different in the clothes that I wear and my attitudes and my confidence to say how I feel. But with clients its, I've come up against a rejection of that, no-that positive notion of difference, but more about difference being a negative construct.

**Extract 14 (Zoe, lines 221-225)**

..it is wanting to connect, wanting to be close to, wanting to validate and to..to kind of come along side and just share really, but then also it's, I do see that being different is a privileged position as well, and wanting to preserve that..difference too.

**Extract 15 (Barbara, lines 479-483)**

I found difference wonderful, fascinating, and I said, that I come a privileged position so if I sat here as somebody who has been sent to Jamaica when she was 3 and sent back when she was 6, like, I had one years ago, grew up in Brixton, I might not say the same thing.

The final extract exemplifies this dilemma that "difference" is often assigned negative or positive attributes. It seems to me that the reasons for this are reflected in the wider context. Coming from a social constructionist perspective, individual dimensions of "difference" or signifiers of "difference" are constructed and meanings are ascribed to them. These constructions of "difference" impact clients in a variety of ways. Participants reconstructed "differences" as positive perhaps due to their own defences regarding their "differences" which may have impacted positively or negatively on their lives or maybe out of guilt and shame regarding their privileged position in

society (Ryde, 2009). What is interesting in the repertoires used regarding positive or negative “difference” is the notion of the “different counselling psychologist” as positive, and the “different client”, or “different other” as pathological. This will be explored further later in this chapter.

### **5.4.3 Minimising “Difference”**

#### **Extract 16 (Violet, lines 4-9)**

**I don’t see people as being hugely different because I look for what human beings have in common about them and that is what makes them sad or happy or what hurts them. And I think that’s the sort of common thread that we all have, and I suppose in my practice I look for that. And I, always look for how I can identify with a client and I don’t look at the externals really, um,**

Several participants stated “difference” is not important, or to a greater extent – that they do not see it at all. This denial manifests in repertoires which seek to instate the notion that there is a universal similarity between all people. A reconstruction of this is that we are all different, together, ergo the same. These notions can be criticised as minimising or marginalising the power dynamics in society or the experience of those whose “differences” have led to discrimination and oppression. This leaves the researcher questioning what it is that we do not want to see when we take up this position and construct “difference” in this way. It also highlights the question of why notions of “similarity” are assumed to be “easier” to work with or more comfortable. This is seen as “the ugly” as it is this presumption of similarity that has been argued to be symbolic violence to the other (Burman, 2004).



## **5.5 “Difference”, Power and Prejudice**

Next is a presentation of the constructions of notions of “difference” which examine how “differences” were constructed in relation to notions of power and notions of prejudice.

### **5.5.1 “Difference” and ‘prejudice, stereotyping and assumptions’**

Here it can be seen notions of “difference” are constructed by employing stereotypes or assumptions.

#### **Extract 17 (Violet, lines 239-244)**

**I mean everyone’s had a first love, everyone’s had their heart broken, um, everyone has experienced shame or humiliation at some point in their lives. Most people know failure, most people know what it is like to be upset by a friend or have a family row. Or-and these, these are the commonalities regardless of all the differences**

This first extract for me typifies those repertoires which go from minimising “differences” and employs a repertoire based on ethnocentric assumptions. What can be seen is that in order to minimise “differences”, the participant tries to collect and list evidence of notions of similarity. However, taking for example the notion of “love” and “heart break”, these are culturally constructed and culturally embedded experiences. The western conception of romantic love is not one that is shared universally through culture or time, and it seems to me that this conveys a repertoire of constructing “difference” using ethnocentric assumptions.

**Extract 18 (Barbara, lines 138-142)**

**Um, [we were] certainly held to task with regard to if we didn't acknowledge differences, like if, you're a white practitioner, and you've got a black client in front of you, you've got to say something, even if they say it doesn't make a difference to me, yes it makes a difference, I am your oppressor**

The extract above demonstrates this further and is much more explicit. It embodies the utilisation of a repertoire that seeks to balance the oppression of the minority by the majority, by addressing that in therapy. However, we can look at positioning and the power dynamic created. It would seem that the participant takes up a white majority and arguably colonial stance and in doing so draws the client into a position of less power as the oppressed. As a researcher, this also may have been about the participant orienting themselves to the research interview, and trying to position herself as powerful in that situation. The constructions of "difference" and positioning of subjects is complex and raises the question of how, if at all, to address "difference" in therapy?

The following two extracts demonstrate repertoires that rest on the ideas of stereotypes and assumptions relating to certain dimensions of "difference".

**Extract 19 (Barbara, lines 510-518)**

**But then a lot of Indian people feel more English than the English and they can spell better [laughs] half the time, went to better schools, that is a cliché and a half, but I have found that to be the case half of the time [laughs] I mean obviously I come across a certain segment of society. I've got some Indian, um colleagues from various parts of India, and I see them at international conferences, they are all highly**

**educated, very active, so I've got to..um, a very positive transference I suppose or a positive expectation or something like that..yeah.**

Here we can note that the participant uses people she knows or who has met professionally to template a group of people and she seeks to state homogeneity in a group of people (Lago and Smith, 2010), particularly related to the education of "Indian" people. She explains how this template and positive assumption can be taken into other relationships. Ultimately, what can be seen here are stereotypes and a repertoire of using these stereotypes to provide information about people who have been grouped together. What will be taken up further in the discussion chapter is wondering why she is telling the researcher this, at this time, and the impact I as a researcher had on the participant that may have co-constructed this notion of "difference".

**Extract 20 (Eliza, lines 517-530)**

**it is not talked about, it is easier not to have, to, I have I have a white English friend and I was talking to a friend about racism or something, or something, or something was so racist and she said 'what, no, racism doesn't exist anymore', and she is quite progressive so. I got so angry, I mean I'm angry even thinking about it now and yeah, she was like, 'racism doesn't exist anymore' and I said to her, 'what?', I kind of said 'what do you mean?', and she said 'oh you know, it just doesn't exist anymore', and I was like, yes it does and I gave my reasons why and she was like, oh, maybe it is just that I don't want to think about it, it is horrible', [laughs] Aw, poor little white girl, having to think about racism, poor her. Argh, do you know what I mean, it makes me so angry, well if you can't be bothered to think about it 'cause it is too**

**painful for you, then how do you think it feels for all the people who are having to experience it and it gets dismissed so easily. It makes you so angry, rrrr [laughs].**

The extract above has been included here as it shows various assumptions regarding notions of “difference”. Firstly it pulls the speaker into a position of “knowing”, knowing that there are prejudices inherent in the world and she does this by positioning an external subject as denying this. She goes on to look at oppression, and who is oppressed. The resonance of the laughter in the passage above was constructing something else and it is hard to decipher if it was to keep the researcher pacified, to disengage from anger, or other motives. The assumption is still being constructed that those in certain majority positions want to ignore the oppression of the minority. At the micro level of the interview situation this researcher wonders if this was employed to assure the researcher that this participant did engage with issues of “race”. At a macro level it seems as though the speaker was shaming the ignorant “other” and contributing to a societal disapproval of ignorance.

### **5.5.2 “Difference” and Prejudice Anxiety**

#### **Extract 21 (Eliza, lines 604-629)**

**Difference is difficult because it is scary, they are scared..they are scared the unknown, it is so much easier to be where you are comfortable and not to never approach something that is different, it is very hard to-like, they, we all, anything that is uncomfortable, obviously it is harder to deal with isn't it, and if it is uncomfortable and to no reward of your own, why would you go into that. I think, everyone tries to go for the more comfortable thing. We all want a more comfortable life and things to be nice and easy. If you have to go and experience**

something that makes you feel uncomfortable, then you avoid it and if you're not really, if you don't really know people from different backgrounds, maybe you, maybe you don't understand their accent, and you find that hard, maybe it is easier just to avoid them

The extract above demonstrates the use of a repertoire which utilise the notion of fear in working with "difference". The repertoires seem to construct various fears: fear of the unknown, fear of the other, fear of appearing prejudiced or causing offence and hostility towards moves towards political correctness. These "fears" have been discussed in literature, with Burman (2003) using the example of "race anxiety", the notion that when working with the different other there is a heightened anxiety, with multiple facets; fear of causing offence and being labelled as prejudiced.

**Extract 22 (Jane, lines 104-114)**

I do assessments on the phone, and I kind of like read names on the form and if it is a foreign name, I think Oh god..I wonder if I will be able to communicate with them and I have not had problems as of yet, but like my flatmate who is also a trainee has, and I think oh god, I don't want to have to do that, from volunteering of help- I volunteer on a helpline for sufferers of ME, um and sometimes I have one of two calls where I have had people with foreign accents which I have found really difficult to understand um, but also I have had people who phone up, um..and their phone connection is not good and it is so hard to..I feel like I am just not doing my best by them or something.

What was very apparent in the interviews was discomfort when talking about “difference”, and a great deal of defence against appearing prejudiced. The participant uses the linguistic marker of a name as marking a “difference” and constructs a notion of anxiety. She then begins to create a “them”, referring to those foreign names, and an “us”, referring to her and her trainee flatmate. This distances the two groups and assumes that she will be unable to understand someone who is from the other group. What this study does not want to do is to highlight the prejudice and stigmatise it as this would result in shutting down debate. This thesis aims to encourage debate and critically challenge our language use in therapy. What can be seen in the constructions here is that language is being used to defend participants from appearing prejudiced. However, the constructions used and the presentation of discursive subjects highlights embedded assumptions which need to be thought about critically.

### **5.5.3 “Difference” and Political Correctness**

#### **Extract 23 (Jane, lines 334-368)**

**I: so is there a fear of being seen as un PC?**

**P: Yeah, especially as a counsellor, you are supposed to be you know, non judgemental and inclusive and yeah, definitely. I guess there is a certain way of wording things and about saying that you know that the reason you know is that I want to understand you better and I want to know where you come from and what your world is like for you, did I just say world though? These words just pop up, and it is a mine field.**

**I: What is that fear like for you?**

**P: Um..I guess ur..I guess it is not really, it has never come up as a big issues for me because I was always brought up to be inclusive and accept everyone as everybody um..although I do have some prejudices like I will tell myself off though for having them and try to behave in different ways but yeah um, what if you, I guess if you were brought up like I don't know particularly racist or believing something about certain cultures, you would never want to bring that up as a counselling psychologist ever because you would just be attacked like, you would never want to bring that up ever, um and as I think on some of the prejudices I might have like..I mean I worry about like if I say them, you are going to judge me about them? And I worry..like for example sometimes if I – I used to work at a bar up the road and I'd finish at like half 1 in the morning and I'd get the bus back down and um, sometimes I'd get on and there would be like, I don't know, a big like black man on there or something and I'd think like, I immediately would go through my head, I'd be like oh god, just 'cause it is late at night, um and like people would tell me round here, it is not the Asian's you have to worry about it is the black ones with their knife crime, oh god and um so you get on the bus and I am thinking oh god, what if he follows me home or something and then I say to myself – why are you being so ridiculous you don't know this person at all and then I'm like, I'd force myself to sit near them to kind of like get myself out of the prejudice, but it would originally pop up and I'd be like quash it down, so I don't think even, I don't think I can even accept that about myself, so I definitely would not bring it up in supervision or something like that.**

This researcher constructed a response regarding an earlier notion of fearful feelings and summarised them to the participant. The participant, then explored her

professional identity, and employed a repertoire of “Counselling Psychologists’ are not prejudiced”. The participant creates a distinction between professional identity and personal identity. This is then followed by a disclaimer which highlights to the researcher that she is not prejudiced because of how she was brought up. She then, in contrast to the disclaimer, goes on to discuss her own personal prejudices and their origins in society. She employs discourses based on stereotypes about “Asians” and the fear around “Islamophobia”, and “black youth and knife crime”, which are constructions using societal resources used to highlight notions of “difference” that impact her in her personal life. The discussion of prejudices following the disclaimer is an ideological dilemma. This dilemma juxtaposes constructions of her prejudices and her denial of being prejudiced. What can also be noted here is the importance of a method which allows the researcher to attend to how participants were able to orient themselves to the interview situation, looking at the discursive tools used, but also look at a wider context whereby societal discourse are drawn upon. It can be seen in analysis of this extract the importance of attending to the micro and macro levels of discourse.

What the extracts below demonstrate is the two contrasting repertoires described above.

**Extract 24 (Jim, lines 467-490)**

**I think it is all very well have anti-oppressive policy in place, and it is all very well having mandatory training in those policies but I think it is a wider issue that within the NHS, or within a counselling practice. People are not stupid, they know how to tick boxes, they know how to say, right, I have done the mandatory diversity training I know the policies, I know what to say. That doesn’t necessarily mean that they**



don't have some kind of discriminatory stereotype in their mind that kind of in the background, while they are practicing, or you know in the pub when they go home or go for a drink whatever. I think, and even people who, you know, I'm not a racist person for example, that is not to say I don't occasionally have racist thoughts and thankfully, I notice when I am having racist thoughts, I feel guilty about it, I don't want to do it but I'm human, and it is there, and I think it would be stupid for people to just assume that they don't have any discriminatory thoughts at all because, I do-I personally don't believe that's possible. I think it is possible to be reflective and um to kind of..to notice that that is what is happening, I think it is important to be completely self aware of these things, but I think it is a wider, wider issue for society in general and I don't think, certainly not something that has been resolved in this country, I wonder if it has anywhere? I don't think it has but..and there is something in me that that, gets a bit..annoyed with um...with the way that we are trained about these things, it is very black and white um..

Extract 25 (Jim, lines 498-520)

you say the right things, you try to be as PC as you possibly can, and then that is it, that is your module in diversity done. I've been lucky enough to have some additional training within my placement about these things, but again, that was all done online on my own and it was very..kind of, each question kind of basically would make me think what is the most PC thing I can-what is the most PC way I can respond to this question, and that was it done. I don't think it really encouraged me to really kind of pull out all my, my um..what is the word I am looking for...err just it didn't encourage me to pull out and examine all my um..what is the word I am looking for, tut, my discriminatory thoughts and feelings and to look at them and talk

about them, that is another-that-again, I don't think we are encouraged to be honest about these things. Because like I said, you don't have to be actively racist for example, I keep saying racist but I am talking about all discrimination, you don't have to be actively racist to be unintentionally racist, like I said about making assumptions. Um, and I really wish that in group supervision, or even in individual supervision it felt safe enough to go in and say, this is how I felt about so and so, it made me feel uncomfortable that I thought that but I need to get it out and talk about now, to resolves it now. So instead you just put a lid on it and you know, that I guess encourages some kind of background discrimination to go on.

Extract 26 (Eva, lines 74-91)

I: ...There was something in there about assumptions and naming them, and can you tell me more about that? Have you had difficulties with that?

P: OK, my answers are probably not very politically correct, but there is something about how nervous we have got about political correctness, so that you know we are kind of a bit edgier about, a bit afraid to say something like I don't know..oh they are gay, or oh they are mad, or you know, we very careful about using those words because of what people might think of what we do with them, and how we might be labelled for that, so I think that might be something, because we are very aware of needing to try to be equal, you know, be um.. you know, that if a martian landed we'd be happy to chat to them, we'd just sit down and go come and have a cup of coffee, when actually we probably wouldn't, we'd probably just kill them, um so I think it gets to very very basic stuff about being threatened by the other, by what is not comfortable etc and yet at a societal level, we are asked to kind of kid ourselves that we can embrace anybody, anybody is fine, and I just think it is twaddle.

The participants themselves recognise and construct the discrepancy between a need to appear liberal and prejudice free and a deeper acknowledgment of our own personal prejudices and a need to recognise the impact that they have on us professionally. This will be discussed and critiqued in the following chapter, however, what it is important to note here is the construction of “political correctness” as something that as practitioners we “should” do. Yet there is a conflict between that construction and the social reality of having prejudices which participants described.

## **5.6 Professional Discourses on “Difference”**

### **5.6.1 Counselling Psychology – A different discipline**

#### **Extract 27 (Eva, lines 5-12)**

people talk about “difference” and often mean things like race or something like that um, I hope that in counselling psychology we use “difference” a bit more broadly than that, to just mean what clients, ways in which clients feel different, so I guess for me if someone says to me that they don’t fit in, I assume that that is a way in which they feel different, and explore that with them. So for me it is not just about race or...um religion or age or something, but it often gets used like that

#### **Extract 28 (Eva, lines 114-120)**

and I think maybe my kind of guess is that counselling psychology because it is a fairly newish division and has sort of had to make up who it is and define that and um, sort of fight for its corner a bit is maybe a bit more prepared to look at things like that than others are. But that may not be true ‘cause I am not in other things like I’m not a member of say UKCP, so I don’t know what they do in their meetings with

**other therapists, so I don't really know it just a kind of a guess, but I don't actually know, if put to it I haven't done a survey etc.**

What was very apparent as a repertoire was the notion that the discipline of counselling psychology was itself very different to other disciplines. Examples given included our training and routes to accreditation, our approaches to therapy, our abilities to wrestle with bigger epistemological concerns and our own theoretical underpinnings. Although my own personal allegiances would concur with many of these sentiments, it seemed important within the interview that the professional identity and discipline was different from others, and I wondered if this could be related back to recognition. What can be noted is that due to counselling psychology's relatively new recognition as a separate discipline within the BPS, that we were, through language, justifying or demanding recognition based on our "differences" compared to other disciplines.

### **5.6.2 Counselling Psychologists' "differences"**

#### **Extract 29 (Zoe, lines 12-22)**

**So myself as being um, a white young woman and clients I work with being kind of a range of ethnicities, um and ages, and being of female genders.**

**I: Yes all of that sounds good, so can you tell me more about those different areas?**

**P: And how it affects my work as a counselling psychologist? Um, I think it kinds of makes me.. I think what interests me especially is myself growing up and feeling different, feeling different because I was Jewish, being different because I was deaf in one ear, and feeling different because..um I don't know.**

Extract 30 (Zoe, lines 252-262)

I remember having a session with my therapist about being deaf actually and it was really tough, really tough, 'cause I did have a real resistance against, against acknowledging it, and-um, he really kind of pushed me into thinking, acknowledging the kinda grief process of the loss of something I'd never have. I never really had hearing, but there was this loss I had had that I had never really grieved, um and that was really, and I found that really interesting but really quite, um surprising, in me. And moving, so I don't know if that is also an experience I can draw upon in relation to other people's experience of difference and exclusion.

Extract 31 (Eliza, lines 313-325)

I have grown to look darker as I have got older which sounds strange, but part of it I think is my own choice, I wanted to look more Iranian, I identify more with it in many ways, culturally I am English but I also love my Iranian side so um, yeah so I think that is partly down to me and the way I kind of...the earring I might wear or the way I might do my make up, things like that I think make me look more Iranian. If I wanted I could look quite English. I can do both, but I don't really, this is what I like so this is what I do, I don't really care so I do tend to look a bit more Iranian now. People always say to me; 'oh, you look like you have got something in you', what a weird kind of expression anyway! 'You look like you've got something in you', and they kind of "something", it is very weird. Um, I don't really get racism myself, but having to listen to people make some kind of- it is not easy.

As mentioned earlier, one of the most common constructions of "difference" was that of "difference" being pathological and problematic. This was only in relation to the

client, the “different other”. Many of the participants spoke about wanting to be interviewed as they saw themselves as “different”. The participants engagement with their own “differences” and the repertoires used to discuss them were positive: they were more fluid, and “difference” was addressed without fear or anxiety. However, this was not the case for the “different other”, or “the different client”. The extract presented above constructs an empowered position where there is of choice in embracing or denying ones “differences”.

Bringing repertoires together is the following extract which employed the repertoire mentioned by all the participants that identified themselves as non white; the idea that counselling psychology itself is not representative or inclusive to “difference”.

**Extract 32 (Jim, lines 528 – 561)**

the vast majority of trainees are white middle class females, heterosexual able bodied um, there is a significant majority there, and that worries me a little bit, particularly the way the training is structured, you have to have plenty of money to do it, you know, it is a long course, the fees are high and getting higher and you are encouraged –and not have any paid work during your training, that is a lot of money, an entire salary devoted to that training, so either you are getting into a lot of debt or you have got financial support from family, which automatically means that is going to be affluent people on the course, which I don’t think it-I don’t think that is fair, again it is affluent people who have done well academically, and again, I don’t think, I don’t think um, high grades academically at undergrad level, I don’t think they are the only people who have something to contribute, practice wise, research wise, so automatically you have got this very narrow sort of recruitment of people going into this sort of training and you know, that in my experience on my course,

that group of people are not going to feel ok about expressing their vulnerabilities, expressing their sort of discrimination and there assumptions and their stereo types and talking about them and feeling comfortable to examine them.....

People aren't going to be as comfortable examining these things and they are not going to feel. I mean I don't think we have ever been encouraged to-I suppose we have been encouraged in a way but not actively encouraged. There is no real forum to do it in, where you feel safe enough to look at these things, I mean you can't openly talk about them, and that goes from discrimination all the way to that feeling of being a fraud that we were talking about earlier. If you are not free enough to honestly discuss these things without feeling like you will be caught out or blamed or you know..you just have to put a lid on it and ignore it, which I think is actually far more dangerous than being able to express it.

This chapter has aimed to present the analysed findings of this piece of research. It has sought to do this by presenting the interpretive repertoires encountered by this researcher through the process of analysis. Also highlighted were the subject positions and ideological dilemmas present in the data. What will follow in the next chapter is a discussion of these constructions.

## **6 Analysis – Critique of Findings**

### **6.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The previous chapter guided the reader through the interpretive repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions encountered during analysis. This chapter builds upon the descriptions of the prevalent notions of “difference” and critiques them. Within discourse analytic research there are a variety of ways to present the findings (Taylor, 2001). This discussion chapter will critique these descriptions and repertoires. The next and final chapter of the thesis concludes by discussing implications and applications of the analysed data. This organisation is to allow the reader to navigate their way through the thesis clearly and with ease. This chapter critically explores the prevalent notions of “difference” in counselling psychology.

### **6.2 Origins of “Differences”**

#### **6.2.1 “Differences” as essential versus “Differences” as socially constructed**

Two repertoires were employed by counselling psychologists that juxtaposed ideas about the natural versus the social basis of “differences”. This refers us to the epistemological contrast of positivism and social constructionism. Positivist notions of “difference” and the discourses drawn from such ideologies identify “differences” as a set of attributes which have a biological basis in human society (Saranga, 1998). Discourses which perpetuate this notion of “difference” suggest that the “differences” we speak about are tangible structures and are essential and unchangeable (Saranga, 1998). Social constructionism has risen up to challenge this notion. This social



constructionist perspective can be seen as the underlying ideology in some of the discourses presented. These constructions highlight socially constructed roles and ways of being. These two interpretive repertoires were present in all of the interviews and the juxtaposition of the opposing ideologies, an ideological dilemma, was present in several of the transcripts (see 5.2.1 extract 1, p.74).

This researcher has found this to be a conflict with which she has wrestled with in her own critical thinking and writing. Although this study takes up a socially constructed position, it can be seen that this ideological dilemma may be present in the foundations of counselling psychology. As discussed in the literature review and methodology chapters there are epistemological conflicts and tensions present in the discipline of counselling psychology. Counselling psychology can be seen as a discipline that needs to negotiate the tensions between modernism and positivist traditional psychological approaches whilst at the same time allowing for postmodern contributions to challenge its very foundations. It is within this struggle that this researcher has found it hard to negotiate and explore notions of “difference”. Philosophically and linguistically, this researcher has been pulled in different directions: one of which alludes to “differences” being essential, the other that they are solely constructed. This has changed the researcher’s positioning throughout the research and the critical realist position now adopted is explored further in the concluding chapter to this thesis.

Within the data the repertoires can be seen as accurately reflecting the difficulty in holding this tension and so participants oscillate between these two discourses. It must be noted that in doing this counselling psychologists take up various subject positions. When employing the “differences” as essential repertoire, the position

taken up is that of the positivist approach of traditional psychology. In the repertoires where socially constructed “differences” were prevalent there is a postmodern stance. It has been argued that when participants use a repertoire they are not always aware of the implications rather they are drawing upon available discourses (Saranga, 1998). What is interesting is why people draw on different repertoires at different times and the subtle and implicit effects of the repertoires used and the ideologies they support. It is important to constantly engage with the implications of the language we use as counselling psychologists’ (Lago and Smith, 2010). The danger is that if we do not critique some of the modernist conceptions of “difference” ultimately we may allow oppressive or discriminatory practices to occur. For example, the essential arguments towards “differences” have often been used as the basis for oppression and there is a legacy of prejudice and inequality which is at risk of being repeated. When we conceptualise “differences” as innate and fixed, we create predetermined and rigid labels. We have then removed the fluidity and possibility of change for our clients. This limits the space for exploration and the multiple meanings of “differences” (Saranga, 1998), particularly in therapy. This can be seen in the critiques of mental health diagnostics and in critiques of the concept of “race” (Lago and Smith, 2010), both of which exemplify the abuses and dangers of rigid and uncritical thinking. Counselling psychology is embedded and situated in a societal context and it is important to question whether this tension and its implication is solely due to the legacy of modernist roots of psychology, or just part of the wider social preference for modernist positivistic discourses? Ultimately what is crucial to practice is to question which, if either, of these repertoires is more facilitative in practice.

### **6.3 Dimensions of “Difference”**

#### **6.3.1 “Difference” as ‘Monocular’**

Participants often constructed “differences” as single facets of identity. Here, in drawing upon this repertoire, participants were able to focus in on a specific notion of “difference”. This can be critiqued for not recognising the multiplicity of identity and the multifaceted nature of “differences”. For example, what it means to be “gay” may be influenced by many other facets of identity, like “gender”, “age” and “race”. Another concern for practitioners here is that it seems the deployment of a repertoire that focuses on single dimension of “difference” when talking of “the different other” can result in the client being used as a template for that “difference” (Lago and Smith, 2010). Practitioners may be seduced into thinking about a “difference” they have worked with and using a client as a template for a group of people (Lago and Smith, 2010). This assumes a level of group hegemony for each “difference” which is problematic in terms of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice (Lago and Smith, 2010). This directly contradicts the notions within counselling psychology that seek to give primacy to subjective experience (Rafalin, 2010). In practice this could also mean that practitioner’s perceptions of their clients “differences”, and the transferred template, may obstruct a client’s narrative, which may not be about that perceived “difference” or about “difference” at all. However, one can wonder as to why participants in the interview, and people in a wider context, deploy this repertoire so frequently. It can be argued that it is because we are subject to language and once something is defined and placed into language it is hard to keep a sense of fluidity around it. In this case when some signifying characteristics are grouped and defined as

“race”, “gender” or “sexuality”, each contains a myriad of discourses. It is therefore easy, given human nature’s leniency towards labelling (Saranga, 1999), to allow these notions to become rigid and fixed.

This repertoire of constructing “difference” as monocular has been highlighted in postmodern critiques of “difference”, as “monocultural” (Burman, 2003). The decision to refer to this construction as monocular rather than “monocultural” (Burman, 2003) is that the notion of “monocultural”, linguistically, conceptualises “differences” as different aspects of culture which, for this researcher, harks back to the “multicultural” and “cross-cultural” discourses which this thesis has sought to critique.

### **6.3.2 “Difference” and “race”**

The methodology used in this thesis allows for a deep acknowledgement of the researcher’s own reflexivity and the notions of co-construction (Taylor, 2003). Consequently, it was important to consider when doing this research the impact of the researcher. As someone who may be considered as “racially other” or a “racial minority” during the interview, it was important to consider my impact on the interview and analysis process. As discussed in the analysis chapter the power dynamics of interviews may have been affected and people may have been orienting their discussions to this interview situation. This was held in mind throughout the analysis of data. This researcher found it a difficult process to engage with notions of “difference” on a personal and academic level and did find that their own life experiences as a minority will have impacted what was brought to the co-constructions. This will also have been the case for the participants. The aim next is to discuss the notions of “difference” regarding “race” but it would seem naive to deny

that co-constructions regarding “race” may have been encountered differently by a different researcher’s or participants. Although this is true for all the notions of “difference”, it is issues of “race” that were more consistently encountered in this research.

The constructions regarding “race” recognised “race” as the “obvious difference” (5.3.2, extract 4, p.79) and resulted in this researcher questioning the signifiers of “race”. Firstly, it can be seen that the notion of “race” being “obvious” was used by several participants, and this rests on the notion that it is something apparent from the outset. Arguably, this is not always the case, very often this researcher has been placed under a spectrum of racial identities by people assuming that they can judge “race” by your skin colour and subsequently this British Pakistani Asian, has been placed from a “white European”, to a “Palestinian”, to someone of “mixed race”. The question this leads the researcher to is, what are the signifiers of “race”? Is it purely skin colour, and is that always as obvious as the dichotomous structure of “black” people and “white” people? It is also important to question why in some circumstances “race” was noted as the obvious difference and something participants orientated themselves towards. However, in other interviews, with Jim for example, there was the obvious difference of gender and neither of us orientated ourselves to this. I think this exception gives credibility to the notion that currently “race” is a complex and prominent issue that is noticed, but increasingly difficult to talk about (Lofthouse, 2010).

Lofthouse (2010), discusses how the definitions of “race” are often vague, and how there is little attention paid to how groups of people were categorised into these racial “differences” that are constructed. Lofthouse (2010) goes on to explain that these

gaps are often filled with political histories that indicate what we all mean by “race” is in fact skin colour. There is also the idea that although this may be the obvious “difference” in the room, and maybe it was in the interview situation, in the current climate it is deemed inappropriate or improper to refer to “race” directly (Lofthouse, 2010). This links to the final repertoire presented, where “culture”, “race”, “ethnicity” and “religion” are used synonymously (5.6.2, extract 6, p.80). Perhaps moving away from mentioning the racial signifiers allows a safer territory for the participant to refer to certain “differences”. It would seem that maybe discursively notions of “culture” or “language” are deemed acceptable arenas in which to examine “difference” with a naive curiosity. In contrast, referring to “race” and its signifiers would seem unsafe, and potentially inappropriate or unacceptable.

The constructions regarding “race” and racial signifiers referred to directly or indirectly, highlight some of the issues that practitioners may face when working therapeutically with notions of “race”. This researcher would urge the reader to challenge their relationship to notions of “race”. Practitioners may want to explore why “race” seems obvious and any underlying assumptions, whether they have ever challenged the categorisation of signifiers of racial “differences” and how these might manifest in therapy. It can also be highlighted that participants needed a safe space to talk about issues of “race” and the question remains as to why this might be. It is also important to consider what is present in the current socio-political climate that may make it difficult to talk directly about issues of “race” and what impact this has on therapeutic practice. Although notions of “race” and their constructions were not the focus of this research they have fascinated this researcher. Consequently, they would be considered as an interesting avenue for further research.

### **6.3.3 “Difference” as ‘binary and dichotomous’**

Constructing “differences” in binary and dichotomous structures was prevalent in the data. This has been argued to be one of the most common constructions of “difference” (Woodward, 1997). This can be critiqued as being reductive. For example, notions that construct “difference” as binary are problematic, as one can question which signifiers are used to put people in either category. It also prompts the researcher to question whether this allows enough fluidity for people to change the label’s ascribed to them. Also it can be seen clearly that many “differences” are more complex than “sick” or “well”, “black” or “white” and rather there is a continuum of possible identities between the extreme binary oppositions (see 5.3.3, extracts, 7 and 8 p. 81). When looking at polarised constructions and what this may mean it is important to look at the frequency of this construction. Only one participant challenged this notion, the rest employed it frequently. Participants may have been using this construction due to the ease with which dualisms describe “difference” (Woodward, 1997). However, the dangers are: that the “different other” may be constructed as deviant from the majority group and consequently, this “difference” from the norm or majority can become stigmatised and pathological and that we ignore the complexity of human beings.

Often in binary constructions one extreme is perceived as the norm and majority group which the other extreme, the minority, differs from. This majority and minority positioning creates a “them” and “us” mentality (Elefetheriadou, 2010). The different client is then constructed as the “different other”. It has been argued that linguistically such binary constructions are needed to afford meaning as Saussurean linguistic

theory states (Hall, 1997). However, it is important to explore and critique these meanings and implications of employing this repertoire.

In practice therefore the majority therapist may be conceptualising difference as all those different to them. This would mean taking aspects of identity and seeing difference only when it is directly opposed to that facet of identity. Within this extreme polarity of “difference” grouping of people may occur. When such groups are created practitioners may be seeking to find some homogeneity or hybridity within that group. This can arguably be seen as reductive and could even be criticised as symbolic violence (Burman, 2004), especially when the power “differences” within these constructions are explored (Woodward, 1997).

## **6.4 “Difference” – the good, the bad and the ugly**

### **6.4.1 “Difference” as ‘pathological and problematic’**

This was the most common construction of “difference” encountered by the researcher. It would seem that “difference”, specifically in clinical work, was more often than not constructed as a problem or obstacle in relation to identifying with or understanding the client. This was typified by several participants who employed the idiom of the “elephant in the room”. “Difference” was then seen as an issue which was not being explicitly discussed. Taking up this position of “differences” blocking some connection with the other meant the similarities were seen as a safer place for therapeutic work. In wondering why this might be it seems important to look at the two separate notions here. On the one hand there are notions of “difference” that are constructed from signifiers, to show us as dissimilar. The other is the meanings that



are then ascribed to these “differences” which lead to particular power dynamics and inequalities. Perhaps, linguistically, these cannot be separated. But what can be seen here is that the signifier themselves, skin colour, sexual preferences, a name or the years one has lived for are not in themselves problematic, rather it is the meanings that are ascribed to them and the meanings ascribed to being different or being the same.

It seems important to reiterate here the works of Levinas, who criticised the dominance of assumptions of sameness, and the relegation of “differences” and instead put forward notions that the “other” is ungraspable and infinitely foreign (Kearney, 1994). Consequently, we can move to accept that “difference” is infinite and we cannot ever truly understand the other. Instead we can then place ethics and relationality at the fore and we would be able to conceive “differences” as something that can be valued and respected. In turn, therapeutically, the implications for this would be that therapy could be a place for individuals to explore both the positive and negative constructions of their “differences”, deconstruct what these “differences” may mean in their subjective experiences and potentially be empowered by the process. Subsequently, when “differences” are constructed as problematic it is important to critique whether we are imposing an assumption of sameness or relegating “differences”.

#### **6.4.2 “Difference” as ‘positive’**

Several constructions of “difference” were seen as positive whereby “differences” were seen as beneficial to the individual. However, this was more often in reference to the participants than to clients. This created a repertoire where participants were

“different” and could reflect on how it had been a positive factor in their life experiences. However, the client, the “different other” was seen as pathological, or their “difference” made them difficult to connect with. This highlights two different notions of “difference”. It constructs a notion where labels chosen by the individual to acknowledge parts of their identity can be empowering. It also constructs a notion where being deviant to, or differing from, the majority or powerful subject was seen as problematic.

#### **6.4.3 Minimising “difference”**

The repertoire minimising “differences” was constructed by participants using constructs that assume ‘we are all different, ergo the same’ or that ‘we are all the same at the end of the day’. When these repertoires were used, participants were in fact reducing “difference” and its meanings. It can be seen that this reduction of notions of “difference” to notions of “sameness” allows for an assumption of sameness (Levinas, 1969), allowing our similarity to be the building block for identification and ultimately equality.

This may have its place in social philosophy where it is purported that different groups need recognition of “difference” and similarity at different times for different ends (Presby, 2003). Presby (2003) utilises Honneth’s (1995 as cited in Presby, 2003) theories as he challenges what he calls utilitarian and reductionist accounts of social struggles. She explores how he draws on Hegel and Mead and can be said to propose that people’s struggles are located around social insult and disrespect; focussing on the central role of the intersubjective recognition as a driving force behind social movements (Preseby, 2003). For counselling psychology it could be illuminating to

think about recognition in terms of the intersubjective dyad. It was illuminating to use Honneth's philosophy to understand politics in South Africa and how groups were struggling for recognition of similarities and differences at different times for different political ends during apartheid (Preseby, 2003). For Presby (2003), it was important that people's similarity be recognised first so that they may be granted some form of equality, and then upon that foundation, recognition of the "difference" is needed. Within practice, subsequently, there may be a parallel need for clients to have that which makes them similar or that which makes them different, recognised at different times in their lives. Consequently, practitioners would need to be able to allow for the subjective experience of the individual to come to the fore of therapy without imposing a need to describe "differences" in the first session, or make assumptions of sameness.

## **6.5 "Difference", Power and Prejudice**

It feels important here to mention my own vested interest within the subject and refer back to my reflexivity addressed within the Introduction and Method chapters. My own reflexivity was very fundamental to the research process throughout and there were times during several of the interviews where what was being discussed made me uncomfortable. From the outset I had planned for the interview to be a safe and facilitative experience, however, there were times where I wanted to challenge what was being said, but felt unable to do so.

What was apparent at these times was the "shadow side" of the therapist in relation to "differences", intolerances and prejudices (Wheeler, 2006). Wheeler (2006) indicates that there is no one specific way to manage envious, hurtful or destructive

feelings towards others. However, we must be careful not to use the mask of tolerance to hide prejudice (Bauman, 1991). Wheeler (2006) speaks of how Clarke's (2003) notion of "new racism" may be extended to all "differences", and in fact stating that "we" are trying to be unprejudiced or more tolerant to "you", the other, means that "you" cannot be like "us". There can be seen a need to make reparation for past injustices, however, in doing this there is colonial assumptions and ethnocentric thinking, as well as a backlash to the tackling issues of "difference".

#### **6.5.1 "Difference" and 'prejudice, stereotyping and assumptions'**

With this in mind, several stereotypes and assumptions were used and deployed in the constructions of notions of "difference". Arguably, some of the constructions had underlying ethnocentric assumptions. Although, this is understandable, it highlights the need for practitioners to be aware of assumptions they make and the positions this draws them into. The second extract in this section represented how the speaker puts themselves in the position of an oppressor (see 5.5.1, Extract 18, p.89). In therapy this pulls the client into the position of the oppressed and in the interview situation, the researcher. This positioning is important to explore as there was a discourse which meant that when issues of power "difference" were present, they had to be explained to the client. Although the intentions here were admirable, one could argue that this said more about the practitioner's need rather than facilitating a client's narrative, regarding "difference" or not.

The next extract presented the participant using examples of people she knows personally and professionally to template a group of people, and she seeks to state homogeneity in a group of people, particularly related to education and "Indian"

people. She goes on to speak of taking this into other relationships. Ultimately, what can be seen here are stereotypes, and a repertoire of using these stereotypes to provide information about a group of people. This leaves one wondering why she is telling the researcher this and why at this time? It also brings into question the impact the researcher had on the participant that may have contributed to this co-constructed this notion of “difference”. The participant may have been trying to orient to the interview situation with someone she may have seen as “Indian” and therefore is possibly distancing herself from more negative stereotypes, by employing a positive one. On a macro level, the question that this evokes is what use stereotypes may have. This researcher would argue we all use such knowledge or markers to help us when we are lost in conversation with others or ourselves. It is then that we fall back on rough approximations and stereotypes. This is important to note, as although this is understandable, in therapeutic practice the deployment of stereotypes could be inappropriate and in fact a form of symbolic violence against the other.

### **6.5.2 “Difference” and Prejudice Anxiety**

Wheeler (2006) describes how Kleinian theory is useful in explicating racism (Clarke, 2003). It has been used in explaining reactions to “difference”, specifically regarding feelings of fear and anxiety. This is one theory used to explain the anxiety felt when approaching issues of “difference”. From a social constructionist point of view, it is in fact one discourse used to construct the notions anxieties regarding “differences”. What can be seen from the analysis of data is that several participants did construct an anxiety around working with “difference” and fears of appearing prejudiced. “Differences” or talking about “difference” seemed to make participants

uncomfortable at times. Many spoke of how this led them to worrying about working with “difference” therapeutically and silenced debate for fear of being labelled as prejudiced (see 5.5.2 and 5.5.3, extract 23-26, p. 92-7).

### **6.5.3 “Difference” and Political Correctness**

Language is a complex tool and it is of extreme importance within the therapeutic encounter (Lago and Smith, 2010). Within such an encounter language can be seen as powerful, able to bolster self esteem, to encourage, to understand or to offer interpretation (Lago and Smith, 2010). However, the power of language can also be seen in a negative light. Thus, if language has power in the therapeutic encounter, we as practitioners must be concerned about our use of language in relation to clients. Hutton (2001) has written about the backlash against political correctness by the far right in the United States and it would seem to me that the same has happened in the UK with a discourse of “political correctness gone mad” being rife. Hutton (2001) speaks of how the far right launched a campaign against cultural and linguistic manifestations of liberalism, which ultimately has discredited the political project. The notion of “political correctness” now, arguably, has a stigma and has become a term of some derision used when people feel their use of language is being policed. The main problem here is that people oversimplify the use of language and ignore the integrity of the endeavour (Lago and Smith, 2010). The fear around language use and “difference” is a complex interaction. There is not just a collection of taboo words we are not “allowed” to use. Rather language may be seen a tool through which oppression and discrimination may be reinforced and maintained or challenged. What is important is a critical engagement with these ideas and feelings rather than punitive

or reactionary responses. It is because of the importance of language, which this thesis reiterates, that practitioners uses of jargon, stereotypes, stigma and exclusion need to be explored in language. This will be important for the future of the discipline, rather than allowing language to be used to determine a reality that is not in keeping with counselling psychology's ethical standards (Division of Counselling Psychology, 2008 as quoted on page 37 of this thesis).

## **6.6 Professional Discourses on “difference”**

### **6.6.1 Counselling Psychology – A different discipline**

The repertoire presented next constructed counselling psychology as a “different” discipline. It is a construct that can be discussed in terms of social philosophy and the notion of “recognition” (Presby, 2003). The idea that similarity and “difference” need to be recognised at various times for different ends is important, particularly looking at counselling psychology's current identity and its future. As Moller (2011) highlights, maybe this is a time where counselling psychology as a discipline needs to be thinking about its identity, in reference to other disciplines in the psychological therapies, in the British Psychological society, and the future. Moller (2011) also highlights how our “different” discipline could be a space to think about notions of “difference” differently and in new ways. This then in turn could potentially impact both therapy rooms, and politics alike. Notions of application and implications of research on “difference” will be explored further in the concluding chapter.

### **6.6.2 Counselling Psychologists' "differences"**

This was discussed in more detail earlier (see 6.4.3) but what can be seen here is that repertoires constructed our "differences" as creative and valuable in our development but that those of our clients are potentially deviant or pathological. These constructions highlight the tentative nature of language in constructing notions of "difference" in various ways. What it would seem is important to take from this is to think about our language use in therapy, so that everyone, practitioner and client alike, would get to explore "differences" as creative and valuable in all their complexity.

This chapter has presented a critique and discussed the findings of this research. The notions of "difference" that were described in the fifth chapter have now been critiqued. Further discussion and conclusions are made in the following chapter.



# **7 Conclusions**

## **7.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This final chapter presents the conclusion of this thesis. Firstly, there is a summary of the research findings in conjunction with the research questions posed. The method used is discussed and critiqued along with any other methodological issues that presented themselves during the research process as are the limitations of the study. The contribution of this thesis to counselling psychology is explored. Potential implications for further research are presented. This researcher's reflections of the research process are described. Some final thoughts conclude this thesis.

## **7.2 RESEARCH SUMMARY**

The overarching research question for this thesis was: what discourses were prevalent in counselling psychology practice concerning notions of "difference"? This overarching question was broken down into how counselling psychologists' talk about notions of "difference", where this can position them and then attention was paid to any ideological dilemmas encountered in this talk. Data was gathered in the form of semi-structured interviews from eight participants and these were tape-recorded and transcribed. These transcripts were then coded and analysed. Analysis of data, in line with the work of Potter and Wetherall (1987) was conducted in three major phases. The initial phases of reading, and re-reading, the text was repeated and was followed by searching within the data for inconsistencies and internal contradictions in the data. Then began a second phase whereby the data was searched for regular patterns of variability of accounts in the transcripts. Any repeatedly occurring descriptions,

explanations, arguments and basic assumptions were identified. In the final stage, it became apparent one could identify basic assumptions underlying various ways of talking about notions of “difference”. Subsequently, a master list of repertoires was created and the reader was guided through the findings in the analysis chapter of the thesis. These were then discussed in detail. The findings were that several repertoires were encountered by the researcher, and were given titles and are presented in the table below.

**Table 1: Summary of notions of “difference” constructed in counselling psychologists’ discourse**

<b>Origins of “differences”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “differences” as essential versus “differences” as socially constructed</li> </ul>
<b>Dimensions of “difference”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “difference” as ‘monocular’</li> <li>• “difference” and “race”</li> <li>• “difference” as ‘binary and dichotomous’</li> </ul>
<b>“Difference” – the good, the bad and the ugly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “difference” as ‘positive’</li> <li>• “difference” as ‘pathological and problematic’</li> <li>• Minimising “difference”</li> </ul>
<b>“Difference”, Power and Prejudice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “difference” and ‘prejudice, stereotyping and assumptions’</li> <li>• “difference” and Prejudice Anxiety</li> <li>• “difference” and Political Correctness</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Discourses on “Difference”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Psychology – A different discipline</li> <li>• Counselling Psychologists’ “differences”</li> </ul>

This was then discussed in chapter 6 with attention paid to how this compares to notions of “difference” in the literature. An attempt was made to explore how notions

of “difference” may be located, historically, socially and politically, and within the context of counselling psychology.

The repertoires that constructed “difference” as essential, or socially constructed, highlight an ideological dilemma in counselling psychology regarding its diverse underpinnings. The various repertoires used to construct dimensions of “difference” were examined and critiqued. This researcher aimed to critically explore what the impact of using these constructions could be. The repertoires concerning whether “difference” was a positive or negative construct were examined so as to see why participants may have constructed “difference” in these ways and to what ends. Repertoires were also encountered which drew attention to participants discomfort and anxiety in working with “difference” and this researcher found novel insight into practitioners relationship with notions of “political correctness”. Finally, repertoires were encountered which constructed notions of “difference” specifically within counselling psychology, and the implications of this was explored.

### **7.3 DISCUSSION OF CRITICAL DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY**

This section of the final chapter critically reviews the methodology used in this thesis and the implications for counselling psychology. It looks at the utility and implications of the twin focal nature of critical discursive psychology and any tensions or debates that have arisen during the research process, culminating in an evaluation of the method.

As mentioned more extensively in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3) of this thesis, this researcher chose to utilise a twin focus. The distinction between two major branches of discourse analysis, discursive psychology and critical or Foucauldian

Discourse Analysis, was blurred (Wetherell, 1998). Discursive psychology traditionally concentrates on how people use discursive strategies to achieve interpersonal objectives in a social interaction (Willig, 2001). Critical discourse analysis focuses on ways of being which are available to people (Willig, 2001). The distinction between the two originated from the epistemological differences between them. It has been proposed that the analysis of discursive practices and discursive resources in twin focus is needed (Potter and Wetherell, 1995). Wetherell has further critiqued the division of labour within discourse and stated that this can be counterproductive (Wetherell, 1998).

Wetherell and Edley (1999) use this approach in their study which draws on the threads between the competing theoretical camps. Their work notes that the divisions within discourse analysis have been a mistake and that discursive approaches need more of an eclectic base (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). A twin focus supposes that when people speak, their talk reflects not only the local pragmatics of that specific interaction in a conversational context but also broader patterns in the collective sense making and understandings (Wetherell and Edley, 1999). This was found to be true by the researcher throughout the analysis. It can be noted that there was constant interplay of participants orienting to the research interview and drawing on something from a wider context. However, this did make the analysis process challenging and at times confusing, specifically when it was difficult to tell whether participants were orienting to the interview or drawing on the wider discourses. In reflection I would assume that it is in fact both. This seems aptly characterised by Billig (1991) where it can be seen that we are both products and producers of discourse.

This research argues that this micro and macro level tension is one that therapeutic practitioners often face. The notion of attending to what is happening in the therapy room and what is happening in the wider context concurrently is a challenge practitioners often endure. Therapy does not exist in a vacuum and this researcher proposes that neither do research nor interviews. There is a certain comfort and ease with choosing one element to focus on, in therapy, or in this research. However, this researcher has found that if one can endure the epistemological and methodological tensions, a richer analysis may be found. Critique of this twin focus would be that neither the micro, nor the macro, is attended to with as much attention to detail as if they were looked at separately, due to the time constraints and split focus of the researcher. However, this split focus seems fitting and necessary within counselling psychology, where the negotiation of tensions and commitment to attend to the micro level, and macro level, of clients experience is honoured.

The main tension between the two discourse analytic camps refers to the different epistemological positions regarding the agency of participants and how to conceptualise experience. With regard to the agency of participants, discursive psychology conceptualises the speaker as an active agent who has a stake in the interview (Willig, 2001). However, critical discourse analysis would argue that one is constrained by the availability of subject positions (Willig, 2001). This researcher would remain neutral as what can be seen in the analysis is that the participants were orienting themselves to the interview but were also drawing on wider constructions, again a case of both/and, rather than either/or. There are no easy answers to integrate these opposing theories. Although epistemologies may conflict at times, the methods of discourse which combine elements of both camps can provide a rich

wealth of data attending to participant's agency in the interview and the constraints they face in wider discourses (Wetherell & Edley, 1998; 1999).

In regard to experience, this was something that this researcher has struggled with throughout the analysis and writing up of the thesis. Discursive psychology would question the very category of "experience" and claim that participants were using discursive constructions of experiences to validate their claims (Willig, 2001). Critical discourse would argue that in fact there are various subject positions which have implications for the possibilities of selfhood and subjective experience (Willig, 2001). There are no easy answers here either and this tension is one that the researcher has tried to hold in utilising a hybrid of both camps. Arguably, participants did use their experiences to stake claims, but they also constructed these experiences in specific ways which drew upon various subject positions. Consequently, these tensions cannot be resolved, but were apparent in the researchers mind throughout. It would seem that when using an eclectic approach there will be methodological tensions, but in order to attend to multiple levels of constructions, they should be endured.

Having explored methodological issues, we come to specifically evaluating the method used. The two main critiques of this method are that it neglects the need for socially contextualised data and that the use of these discursive tools can lead to reductionist claims and ascriptivism (Schlegoff, 1998; Wooffitt, 2005). Firstly, this researcher recognises that in selecting to use a research interview to illicit data, the research was both enabled and constrained. It was enabled as the data elicited was a conversation between two professionals working within counselling psychology in a non judgemental and explorative manner. It can be seen that the data elicited was significant for analysis. This research was also constrained by its research interview

context and its practitioner focus, which can be argued to be limitations of the study. Ultimately, to explore notions of “difference” in practice, real life therapy transcripts would be ideal. However, the ethical constraints on this research deemed this an inappropriate course of action. Subsequently, research based contexts were used, as was a focus on the practitioner’s constructions.

As with all research in selecting methods we highlight certain aspects and obscure others. For this research we can see that the data concerned itself practitioner constructs, but what would be interesting for future research would be to analyse everyday talk. It is also important to consider the impact focus groups may have had on this research, and this could be explored for further research. It was important for this researcher to allow participants to say what they wanted to about notions of “difference” without feeling judged and to allow them to speak about clinical work. Pilot work highlighted that focus groups may diminish this. However, given the findings regarding constructions of political correctness and prejudice anxiety this would have been interesting to analyse in group situation.

In response to critiques regarding critical discursive psychology being reductionist and ascriptive (Wooffitt, 2005), it would seem firstly, that in choosing specific tools in discourse analysis the focus is then limited. This researcher recognises that to go back to the data with new tools would provide different insights. However, in undertaking this study, this researcher found interpretive repertoires to be a tool which facilitated the twin focus of critical discursive psychology, rather than being reductionist. It was also found that the interpretive natures of the repertoires were an important facet in allowing the reader to understand how and where repertoires were encountered, in a transparent and reflexive manner. This allows the reader to take away an

interpretation, with no claims to one definitive reading of the data or any definitive truths.

As for the claim of ascriptivism, it is important that all researchers recognise their qualitative research will always be interpretive and that is what makes reflexivity essential. This researcher has tried to combat the assertion that research always supports the claims of the researcher. This was argued through her recognition of co-construction, her reflexivity and the detailed explication of her interpretations.

What this researcher would argue is that these critiques made against critical discursive psychology and made to support conversational analyses over other approaches to discourse (Wooffitt, 2005). In denigrating other methods, several discourse analysts put forward that their chosen method is the best way to analyse discourse. This researcher would like to state that in fact denigration and binary oppositions of what constitutes discourse analysis are not helpful. In fact, different analyses will provide different insights and although discourse analysis should not be an “anything goes” method, different aspects and methods should be prized or critiqued and utilised to enhance our understanding of various topics.

This researcher would also like to note here the difficulties of writing up a discourse analytic thesis. The epistemological and methodological background to the study dictates that this thesis is itself a discursive contribution to ways of constructing notions of “difference”. This draws attention to the cyclical nature of discourse analytic research (Willig, 2001). In researching discourse, and then in writing it up, we are creating further discourse for analysis. This recognition has meant that this researcher has had to employ careful and rigorous thought to discursive decisions made during write up. These include, but are not limited to: whether to include the



quotation marks around “difference” throughout, which words to use so that the meanings of this researcher are conveyed or the best way to present this study. What has been highlighted here is the notion that discourses demands us to thinking carefully and critically about how we speak, how we write and what the impact of both may be.

Discourse analysis does not seek to evaluate research in the same way as more traditional positivist research (Willig, 2001). Rather than in terms of reliability, validity or replicability, this research would propose that it is in fact situated and contingent, and that participants reconstructed experiences and co-constructed notions of “difference” with this researcher. In turn this researcher aimed to reflexively analyse the data and interpret repertoires and constructs of notions of “difference”. Consequently, it cannot be claimed that the research is neutral or replicable. What this researcher would argue is that the research has been coherent. The analysis of data has been explicated, as well as the interpretations, so as to present a thesis which has upheld notions of rigour and good practice (Taylor, 2001). This researcher would also argue that the data gathered, the analysis and its presentation has been explicated and conducted with a richness of detail (Taylor, 2001). This coherence and rigour defends against the claim of ascriptivism made earlier. Other terms by which this thesis would evaluate itself would be relevance, usefulness and application (Taylor, 2001), which will be discussed further in the next section.

## **7.4 IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research is relevant to the discipline of counselling psychology as it allows the prevalent notions of “difference” found here in counselling psychologists’ talk, to be described and critiqued. This can then facilitate debate, encouraged by this research, so counselling psychology as a discipline can begin to define and construct the best way of working with “differences”. It has been argued that counselling psychology as a profession is in a stage of flux regarding its identity, and one way forward is to begin to make more of a commitment to defining ourselves in relation to “difference” and diversity (Moller, 2011). More research in the area was suggested by Moller (2011), and this research aims to address that gap in the literature. What can be seen approaching the end of this study is that more work needs to be carried out.

Given the pluralist stance of counselling psychology (Rafalin, 2010), one could argue that there are many ways to do this, and many truths to be encountered. From this research, it would seem that discourse analysis can make significant contributions to counselling psychology, specifically at a time where there is a dominance of interpretive phenomenological analysis in the field (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). Spong (2009) puts forward the notion that discourse analysis has a wealth of contributions for counselling psychologists and this researcher concurs. The diversity within the field allows for a playful reconstruction of a method to facilitate the position of the researcher and the topic at hand and consequently, other discourse analytic traditions could supply a range of research regarding “difference” in counselling psychology as well as other topics.

This researcher would also recommend following this twin focus approach, to see if it provides new insights in other areas. For this researcher, using this method again may allow for an exploration of notions of “similarity” or the constructions of dimensions of “difference”, like “race”, “age”, “culture” or “disability”. One would also argue for a reconstruction of this research utilising focus groups, or attending to client’s constructions, as discussed above.

Overall, this research would suggest that counselling psychology does seek to embrace anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practices in research and practice. It has highlighted the need for practitioner’s to critically examine their language use and role in the constructions of “difference” and the impact that some constructions can have in therapy. It has also highlighted a potential need for counselling psychologists to express their fears and prejudices and a lack of an appropriate forum within which to do this. For this researcher, further research within this area is crucial.

## **7.5 THE CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE OF THIS STUDY**

This research is useful in contributing to the field of counselling psychology. Potentially, it can make a contribution to the future identity of counselling psychology (Moller, 2011), and its strong commitment to anti-oppressive practice (Lago and Smith, 2010). What has been highlighted in the prevalent constructions of “difference” in counselling psychologist’s talk as they were described and critiqued, and ways in which counselling psychologists’ frame notions of “difference” at a micro and macro level. What this research has aimed to explicate to the reader is the nature of “discourse” and the importance of language in constructing the world. Consequently, how we construct phenomena and our language use as practitioners is important. What this

study demands of practitioners is to think critically about language that is used, particularly in relation to the phenomena of “difference”, and the implications that various constructions may have. In doing so the commitment to anti-oppressive practice becomes less of a policy to sign up to and more of an engagement at a deep level. If we are then able to make this commitment then we can begin to think about the placing “difference” and diversity has in the future identity of counselling psychology.

This researcher found that the constructions reminded her of the works of Levinas, who criticised the dominance of assumptions of sameness and the subsequent downgrading of “differences” and rather put forward notions that the “other” is ungraspable and infinitely foreign (Kearney, 1994). Consequently, if we can move to accept that “difference” is an infinite concept we can begin to appreciate that we cannot ever truly understand the other. This may allow for practitioners to place ethics and relationality at the fore and conceive “differences” as something that can be valued and respected. In turn, therapeutically, the implications for this would be that therapy could be a place for individuals to explore both the positive and negative constructions of their “differences”, deconstruct what these “differences” may mean in their subjective experiences and potentially be empowered by the process.

This study also contributes to the body of literature which looks at discourse analysis and its contribution to counselling psychological research, and in particular the utility of a twin focus in using a critical discursive psychology. It has shown that a synthesis of the two major branches of discourse analysis does create epistemological, methodological and analytic tensions and conflicts. However, it has sought to show

that tensions and ideological dilemmas, although at times problematic and difficult to hold, are in fact that which makes research all the richer.

Finally, it has added to the body of research regarding the best ways for practitioners to work with notions of “difference” in their counselling psychology practice. The aim here would be for the reader and practitioners to question how they use language, how they construct “differences” and to confront the prejudices that surround us all on both a personal and professional level, for both our own sakes and that of our clients.

It is hard to move from this context specific research to applications, however, this researcher would encourage critical thinking as to how practitioner constructions impact clients. Potentially more research is needed in this area. It can also be seen that there were practitioners who recognised their prejudices, and fears of being labelled prejudiced. However, what they did not have access to was an arena that was safe enough to explore them. This highlights a lack of such a forum in supervision, training and research. Further research here may be able to begin to understand and fill this gap.

## **7.6 REFLECTIONS**

Separating the process of conducting this research from my own personal journey is near impossible. This research has meant many different things to me at different times and it is only now in the final stages that I am able to gain a wider perspective of the impact it has had. I am sure that with more time further reflections will emerge, but here I aim to present an overview of these meanings.

Personally, there was a great deal of conflict within myself regarding writing this thesis and approaching the subject matter in an academic forum. In the early stages, many questions arose: did I really want to be considered a minority on my training course researching “difference” and speaking out about inequality? Would I be accused of “playing the race card”? Would I be able to maintain a reflexive stance that did not render the research any more than a personal rant? This, and many other conflicts and anxieties, have stirred within me for the duration of conducting this research. However, as I have read and practiced and carried out the research, I have engaged with “difference” on a deeper level. I have begun thinking differently about “difference” and I have come to a new position.

I have found that the research journey, and end product, has justified the anxiety and fear of stigmatisation I felt. The argument that we all would benefit from thinking about anti-discriminatory practice as inequality damages us all (Lago & Smith, 2010) highlights that in the discipline of counselling psychology we need to engage with and think differently about “difference” and diversity. I would like this research to encourage a critical stance and way of thinking about “difference” that facilitates a deep personal commitment to anti-oppressive practice, rather than a cursory glance at equal opportunities policy or signing up for professional development points. This encouragement towards critical thinking has definitely occurred within me and has profoundly changed the way I practice.

This research has also had a very personal affect of my constructions of how I have perceived myself as “different”. I became aware throughout the research process of my own constructions of “difference”, not just clinically, but constructions of my own “differences”. I became aware how I have often felt “different”: within Asian

communities for being too westernised, in white majority groups as a British Asian and in therapeutic training due to my “race” and age. This experience of being “different” and its constructions and meanings have been challenging to engage with. I would argue however, this research has given me a forum through which to play with how these experiences are constructed to allow me to explore the positive and negative sides of my experiences. Conducting this research has been an empowering experience of exploring my “differences”. This exploration has changed me as a person and has convinced me of the need for therapy to be a place in which we facilitate this journey for our clients.

## **7.7 FINAL THOUGHTS**

In this final and concluding part of this thesis it seems important to look specifically at the application of this thesis’ findings. By application this researcher means the applicability of findings in this discourse analytic study to other areas of interest (Willig, 1999). The relationship between discourse analytic work and its application has typically been problematic (Willig, 1999). However, it has been argued that discourse analytic work can be used to make suggestions for interventions, and it can be beneficial to do so in therapeutic work (Willig, 1999). The main suggestion here would be to encourage practitioners to take a critical approach to language, and constructions of “difference”. By doing so the hope is to ensure that therapeutic practice avoids symbolic violence to the other and is a facilitative place that challenges the inequalities found in other areas of society.

This researcher notices that there are risks and limitations in this application, but believes that discourse analysis can be used to examine constructions, which highlights

the flexibility and change through use of language (Willig, 1999). This can be seen in the extent to which certain discursive constructions can have implications for client's agency (O'Connor, 1995 as cited in Willig, 1999). This means that the paradox of individuals being products and producers of discourse, allows us to think critically about the language we use and when we use it, and further, to think critically about the tentative nature of language and the fluidity behind the meanings of the words we use. This research attempts to avoid definitive or grandiose statements. This research is, however, contributing discourses and repertoires as ways of talking about "difference". It is in itself a text and discourse available for analysis. Therefore, although application is contentious, this study would argue it is applicable to both the micro level and macro levels of discourse. The micro level is the consulting rooms of practitioners and this research highlights the need for critical engagement with interactions with clients and the need for facilitative constructions. The macro level concerns the wider societal context of which we are all a part. Arguably, if we live in a prejudiced society then we are all in some way contributing to it. Therefore, if we begin to think in creative resourceful ways about "difference", and challenge the prejudices in ourselves, then this may be a small step towards addressing inequality. Notions of inequality and oppression can therefore begin to be explored and challenged in practitioners, in therapy, and this will have implications for training and further research.

The specific implications regarding training and research would be that participants identified the lack of a forum to speak about "difference" and in particular prejudice within their training programs or within supervision. This research also identifies the need to attend to issues of anti-oppressive practice throughout training programs



rather than as an add-on module. Finally, a need for further and continued professional development, which assists in working with “difference”, was highlighted. Further research would be useful in exploring ways counselling psychologists can address these gaps.

The aims of this research, therefore, have been met. The chief aim of this research was to describe and critique the prevalent notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. The aim of this researcher was to encourage debate as to the best way to construct “differences” which can facilitate a client’s subjective experience in counselling psychology. But what remains to be seen, and what this research and any further research in the area would seek to do is to make practitioners think about their language use, in therapy and outside, and to question whether they could, or should, think differently about “difference”.

## **Bibliography**

Abreu, J. M., Gim Chung, R. H., & Atkinson, D. R. (2000). Multicultural Counselling Training: Past, Present and Future Directions. *The Counseling Psychologist* , 641-656.

Atkinson, D., Wampold, B., & Worthington, R. (2007). The 2006 Leona Tyler Award address: Our Identity: How multiculturalism saved counselling psychology. *The Counselling Psychologist* , 35 (3), 476-486.

Bauman, Z. (1991). *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bhugra, D., & Bhui, K. (1998). Psychotherapies for Ethnic Minorities: Issues, context and practice. *British Journal of Psychotherapy* , 14 (3), 310-326.

Billig, M. (1991). *Ideology and Opinions: Studies in Rhetorical Psychology*. London: Sage.

Billig, M., Condor, S., & Edwards, D. (1988). *Ideological Dilemmas: A Social Psychology of Everyday Thinking*. London: Sage.

British Psychological Society. (2006). *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.

Brown, R. (1995). *Prejudice: its social psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Burman, E. (2004). From Difference to Intersectionality; Challenges and Resources. *European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counselling and Health* , 6 (4), 293-308.

Burr, V. (2003). *Social Constructionism; Second Edition*. Hove: Routledge.

Butler, C. (2002). *A Very Short Introduction to Postmodernism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cahoone, L. (1996). *From Modernism to Postmodernism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Chantler, K. (2005). From Disconnection to Connection: 'Race', gender and the politics of therapy. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling* , 33 (2), 239-256.

Clarke, S. (2003). *Social Theory, Psychoanalysis and Racism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cooper, M. (2009). Welcoming the Other: Actualising the human ethic at the core of counselling psychology practice. *Counselling Psychology Review* , 24 (3-4), 119-129.

Corker, M. (1994). *Counselling - The Deaf Challenge*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Craven, M., & Coyle, A. (2007). Counselling Psychologists' talk about "psychopathology" and diagnostic categories: a reflective account of a discourse analytic study. In E. Lyons, & A. Coyle, *Analysing qualitative data in psychology* (p. 235-247). London: Sage.

- D'Ardenne, P., & Mahtani, A. (1989). *Transcultural Counselling in Action*. London: Sage.
- Derrida, J. (1976). *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Division of Counselling Psychology. (2008). *Code of Conduct*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Division of Counselling Psychology. (2004). *Competency Statement*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Division of Counselling Psychology. (2005). *Professional Practice Guidelines*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Edley, N. (2003). Analysing Masculinity; Interpretive Repertoires, Ideological Dilemmas and Subject Positions. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. J. Yates, *Discourse as Data; a guide for analysis* (pp. 189-228). London: sage.
- Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (1997). Jockeying for Position: The Construction of Masculine Identities. *Discourse and Society* , 2 (8), 203-217.
- Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (1996). Masculinity, Power and Identity. In M. Mac n Ghail, *Constructing Masculinities* (pp. 97–114). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (1992). *Discursive Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Edwards, E., & Pederotti, J. (2008). A content and methodological review of articles concerning multiracial issues in six major counselling journals. *Journal of Counselling Psychology* , 55 (3), 411-418.
- Eleftheriadou, Z. (2010). Cross-Cultural Counselling Psychology. In R. Woolfe, S. Strawbridge, B. Douglas, & W. Dryden, *Handbook of Counselling Psychology* (pp. 195-211). London: Sage.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*. New York: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1971a). *Madness and Civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*. London: Tavistock publications.
- Foucault, M. (1971b, April). The Discourse on Language (trans. Swyer R.). *Social Science Information* , pp. 7-30.
- Fukuyama, M. A. (1990). Taking a Universal Approach to Multi Cultural Counselling. *Counsellor Education and Supervision* , 30, 6-17.
- Gilbert, N., & Mulkay, M. (1984). *Opening Pandora's Box: A sociological analysis of scientists' discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gilbert, P., & Leahy, R. (2007). *The Therapeutic Relationship in Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapies*. Hove: Routeledge.

Gillis, J. R., & Diamond, S. L. (2006). Approaching Multiple Diversity; Addressing the intersections of class, gender, sexual orientation and different abilities. In C. Lago, *Race, Culture and Counselling; the ongoing challenge. Second Edition* (pp. 217-238). London: Open Univeristy Press.

Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.

Hefferon, K., & Gil-Rodriguez. (2011, October). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. *The Psychologist* , 24 (10), pp. 756-759.

Hicks, C. (2010). Counselling Psychology contributions to understanding sexuality. In M. Milton, *Therapy and Beyond: Counselling Psychology contributions to therapeutic and social issues*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hicks, C., & Milton, M. (2010). Sexual Identities: meanings for counselling psychology practice. In R. Woolfe, S. Strawbridge, B. Douglas, & W. Dryden, *Handbook of Counselling Psychology (3rd ed)*. London: Sage.

Hutton, W. (2001, December 16th). Words really are important? *The Observer* , p. 26.

Kearney, A. (1996). *Counselling, Class and Politics*. Manchester: PCCS Books.

Kearney, R. (1995). *States of Mind: dialogues with contemporary thinkers on the European mind*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Lago, C., & Smith, B. (2010). *Anti-Discriminatory Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy: second edition*. London: Sage.

Lago, C., & Thompson, J. (1996). *Race, Culture and Counselling*. Berkshire, England: Open Univeristy Press.

Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and Infinity. An essay on exteriority (trans. Lingis, A.)*. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press.

Loewenthal, D., & Snell, R. (2003). *Postmodernism for Psychotherapists; a Critical Reader*. Hove: Routeledge.

Lofthouse, J. (2010). The 'R' Word. In M. Milton, *Beyond Therapy: Counselling Psychology contributions to Therapeutic and Social Issues* (pp. 229-242). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Manafi, E. (2010). Existential-Phenomenological Contributions to Counselling Psychology's Relational framework. In M. Milton, *Therapy and Beyond; Counselling*

*Psychology's Contributions to Therapeutic and Social Issues* (pp. 21-39). Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

Marsella, A. J. (2009). Diversity in a Global Era: The context and consequence of differences. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* , 22 (1), 119-135.

Marshall, S. (2004). *Difference and Discrimination in Psychotherapy and Counselling*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

McAteer, D. (2010). Philosophical Pluralism; Navigating the Sea of Diversity in Psychotherapeutic and Counselling Psychology Practice. In M. Milton, *Therapy and Beyond; Counselling Psychology contributions to therapeutic and social issues* (pp. 5-19). Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.

McLeod, J. (1994). *Doing Counselling Research*. London: Sage.

McLeod, J. (2001). *Qualitative research in counselling and psychotherapy*. London: Sage.

Milton, M. (2010). *Therapy and Beyond; Counselling Psychology Contributions to Therapeutic and Social Issues*. Chichester, Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

Moller, N. (2011). The identity of counselling psychology is parochial, rigid and irrelevant but diversity offers a solution. *Counselling Psychology Review* , 26 (2), 8-16.

Moodley, R. (2007). (Re)placing multiculturalism in Counselling and Psychotherapy. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling* , 35 (1), 1-23.

Moodley, R., & Lubin, D. (2008). Developing your career to working with multicultural and diversity clients. In S. Palmer, & R. Bor, *The Practitioner's Handbook*. London: Sage.

Moodley, R., & Murphy, L. (2010). Multiple Identities and Anti Discriminatory Counselling Practice. In C. Lago, & B. Smith, *Anti Discriminatory Practice in counselling and psychotherapy* (pp. 137-148). London: Sage.

Orlans, V., & Scoyoc, S. V. (2009). *A Short Introduction to Counselling Psychology*. London: Sage.

Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*. London: Routledge.

Pederson, P. B. (1999). *Multiculturalism as a Fourth Force*. USA: Taylor & Francis.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1995). Discourse Analysis. In J. Smith, R. Harre, & S. L Van Reicher, *Analysing Qualitative Data*. London: Sage.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.

- Preseby, G. (2003). The Stuggle for recognition in the philosophy of Axel Honneth, applied to the current South African situation and its call for an 'African Resistance'. *Philosophy and Social Criticism* , 29 (5), 537-561.
- Rafalin, D. (2010). Counselling Psychology and Research: Revisitng the relationship in the light of our mission. In M. Milton, *Therapy and Beyond; Counselling Psychology contributions to therapeutic and social issues* (pp. 41-55). Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.
- Ryde, J. (2009). *Being White in the helping professions*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Saranga, E. (1998). *Embodying the Social: Constructions of Difference*. London: Routledge.
- Schlegoff, E. (1998). Reply to Wetherell. *Discourse and Society* , 9 (3), 413-416.
- Segal, J. (1997). Counselling People with Disabilities/Chronic Illnesses. In S. Palmer, & G. McMahon, *Handbook of Counselling (2nd ed)*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, J., & Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. In J. Smith, *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Methods*. London: Sage.
- Spong, S. (2009). Discourse analysis: Rich pickings for counsellors and therapists. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* , 1-8.
- Strawbridge, S., & Woolfe, R. (2003). Counselling Psychology in Context. In R. Woolfe, S. Strawbridge, & W. Dryden, *Handbook of Counselling Psychology (2nd ed)* (pp. 3-22). London: Sage.
- Sue, D. W., Bernier, J. E., Durran, A., Feinberg, L., Pederson, P., Smith, E. (1982). Position Paper: Cross Cultural Counselling Competancies. *The Counseling Psychologist* , 10 (2), 45-52.
- Taylor, M., & Loewenthal, D. (2007). A Case of Discourse Analysis: Researching a Client's Experience of Therapy. In D. Loewenthal, *Case Studies in Relational Research: qualitative research methods in counselling and psychotherapy* (pp. 41-66). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillian.
- Taylor, S. (2003). Locating and Conducting Discourse Analytic Research. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. J. Yates, *Discourse as Data, a Guide for Analysis* (pp. 5-49). London : Sage Publications.
- Tindall, C., Robinson, J., & Kagan, C. (2010). Feminist Perspectives. In R. Woolfe, S. Strawbridge, B. Douglas, & W. Dryden, *The Handbook of Counselling Psychology (3rd ed)*. London: Sage.
- Vallianatou, C., Leavey, G., & Brown, J. (2007). Practitioner's Perspectives of Multicultural Sensitivity. *Counselling Psychology Review* , 22 (4), 58-67.

- Weiss, G., & Wodak, R. (2003). *Critical Discourse Analysis Theory and Interdisciplinary*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and Interpretive repertoires; conversation analysis and post structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society* , 9, 387-412.
- Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (1998). Gender Practices: Steps in the Analysis of Men and Masculinities. In K. Henwood, C. Griffin, & A. Phoenix, *Standpoints and Differences: Essays in the Practice of Feminist Psychology* (pp. 156-173). London: Sage.
- Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (1999). Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity: Imaginary Positions and Psycho-Discursive Practices. *Feminism and Psychology* , 9 (3), 335-356.
- Wheeler, S. (2006). *and Diversity in Counselling; Contemporary Psychodynamic Perspectives* . Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Willig, C. (1999). *Applied Discourse Analysis: Social and Psychological Interventions*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology. Adventures in Theory and Method*. Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open Univeristy Press.
- Woods, D. (1992). *Derrida: A Critical Reader*. London: Fontana.
- Woodward, K. (1997). *Identity and Difference*. London: Sage.
- Wooffitt, R. (2005). *Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis: A Comparative and Critical Introduction*. London: Sage.
- Woolfe, R., & Strawbridge, S. (2003). Counselling psychology in Context. In R. Woolfe, W. Dryden, & S. Strawbridge, *The Handbook of Counselling Psychology; Second Edition* (pp. 3-23). London: Sage.
- Worthington, R., & Soth-McNett, A. (2007). Multicultural Counselling Competencies Research: A 20-year content analysis. *Journal of Counselling Psychology* , 54 (4), 351-361.
- Yoon, E., Langrehr, K., & Ong, L. (2011). Content Analysis of Acculturation Research in Counselling and Counselling Psychology: A 22-year review. *Journal of Counselling Psychology* , 58 (1), 83-96.

## **Appendices**

<b>Appendix I</b>	<b>Participant Consent form</b>
<b>Appendix II</b>	<b>Participant Information Form</b>
<b>Appendix III</b>	<b>Participant De Briefing Information</b>
<b>Appendix IV</b>	<b>Correspondence Email/letter</b>
<b>Appendix V</b>	<b>Transcription Notation</b>
<b>Appendix VI</b>	<b>Participant's Demographic Descriptions</b>



## APPENDIX I



### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

#### **Title of Research Project:**

A discourse analytic study into notions of “difference” in counselling psychology.

#### **Brief Description of Research Project:**

Within the context of a therapeutic relationship, what it means to be “different”, and the full impact of these “differences”, is an area that needs to be explored in the discipline of counselling psychology. This proposal outlines the researcher’s intentions of filling this gap within the literature by carrying out a qualitative study using discourse analysis in this area. Exploration into notions of “difference” in counselling psychology, will allow practitioners to examine their work with clients, and ensure that the discipline maintains self critical and reflective. This is a discourse analytic study, analysing the transcripts of ten semi-structured interviews with counselling psychologists or trainee counselling psychologists.

Ten trainee or fully qualified counselling psychologists, will be recruited to engage in hour long interviews, at the university, their place of work or homes. These will be audio recorded. Participants will be given an ID number, and data will not regard specific identifying information about individuals or therapy. Some emotional distress could be experienced following the interviews, and details of further support will be provided for, as well as the researcher offering time to participants, following the interview, for any issues you may have. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, via use of an ID number on the debriefing form. Please contact the researcher with this ID number and they will remove your data (though data in an aggregate form may still be used or published).”

#### **Investigator Contact Details:**

Name

**Farrah Hassan**

School	Human and Life Sciences
University address	Roehampton University
	Whitelands College, Holybourne Avenue, London, SW15 4JD
Email	hassanf12@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone	[removed]

**Consent Statement:**

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings.

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Dean of School (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

**Director of Studies Contact Details:**

<b>Name</b>	Dr Diane Bray
<b>School</b>	Human and Life Sciences
<b>University Address</b>	Roehampton University
	Whitelands College,  Holybourne Avenue, London, SW15 4JD

<b>Email</b>	D.Bray@roehampton.co.uk
<b>Telephone</b>	+44 (0)20 8392 3627

***Dean of School Contact Details:***

<b>Name</b>	Michael Barham
<b>School</b>	Human and Life Sciences
<b>University Address</b>	Roehampton University  Whitelands College, Holybourne Avenue, London, SW15 4JD
<b>Email</b>	<u><a href="mailto:M.Barham@roehampton.ac.uk">M.Barham@roehampton.ac.uk</a></u>
<b>Telephone</b>	+44 (0)20 8392 3617

## APPENDIX II



SCHOOL OF HUMAN & LIFE SCIENCES

Roehampton University

Whitelands College  
Holybourne Avenue,  
London  
SW15 4JD

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

#### **Research Title:**

A discourse analytic study into notions of “difference” in counselling psychology.

You are being invited to take part in a research study conducted by a Trainee Counselling Psychologist as part of a PsychD Counselling Psychology, which will explore notions of “difference” in Counselling Psychology, focussing on the language in use.

What can you gain from your participation?

As a reflective practitioner, you may find this experience interesting and enlightening as you consider your perceptions and reactions to “difference”, the discourses in relation to notions of “differences”, and how these may shape our discipline. It is hoped that this research will help increase awareness of important issues around notions of “difference” and how this affects the practice of counselling psychology.

How will the data be gathered?

A minimum of 10 participants will each be given demographic questionnaires. They will then be asked to participate in a Semi-structured interview at a venue of their choice. Interview will be approximately an hour long, and audio recorded. These interviews will then be transcribed and participants will be allowed to withdraw part or their entire transcript from the study.

The anonymised data from the questionnaire and interviews will be used in a PsychD research doctoral thesis. This will use an ID number given to participants on the debriefing form. Your signed consent will be required for the researcher to use this data, all or part of which might be shown to their supervisor and others responsible for examining the work.

How will confidentiality be maintained?

The questionnaires, data and any forms you sign will be stored in separate secure locations until the study has been marked and results confirmed. Except

in the case of publication of the dissertation, the questionnaires and data will be destroyed once the results for the dissertations have been awarded. If the dissertation is published the anonymised questionnaires and data will be kept for ten years and then destroyed. A copy of the dissertation will also be placed in the Learning & Resource Centre at Roehampton University and will therefore be viewable by students, researchers, teaching staff and examiners.

What are the limits of the confidentiality agreement?

It is important to be aware that although all attempts will be made to maintain confidentiality, it might need to be mitigated if you disclose a danger of harm coming to yourself or others, or if you reveal details of practice, which might be considered ethically questionable, according to the BPS Code of Conduct & Ethics (2006).

Essential information to consider before participating

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from completing the questionnaire or interview at any time and from the research study via use of an ID number on the debriefing form, which will also state the implications of withdrawal and that, data in an aggregate form, may still be used or published. You will not be obliged to complete the questionnaire or interview if you feel uncomfortable for any reason. Participating in this research could lead you to reflect on past experiences, which may be upsetting or painful, and could lead to re-evaluation of your current situation. If you are concerned that you may be affected in this way it is advised that you do not take part in this study.

How will you be debriefed?

Following the interview, you will be provided with a list of sources of help and support, which you can call upon if you experience distress as a result of the taking part in this research study. The researcher will also offer time for you to discuss any issues that you may have.

Who is carrying out this research study?

Trainee counselling psychologist Farrah Hassan is carrying out this study. It has been reviewed by, and has received clearance from, the sub-committee of school ethics committee at Roehampton University.

If you are happy to participate in the above study please contact;

**Investigator Contact Details:**

Name	<b>Farrah Hassan</b>
School	Human and Life Sciences
University address	Roehampton University  Whitelands College, Holybourne Avenue, London, SW15 4JD
Email	hassanf12@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone	[removed]

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Dean of School (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

**Director of Studies Contact Details:**

<b>Name</b>	Dr Diane Bray
<b>School</b>	Human and Life Sciences
<b>University Address</b>	Roehampton University  Whitelands College, Holybourne Avenue, London, SW15 4JD
<b>Email</b>	D.Bray@roehampton.co.uk
<b>Telephone</b>	+44 (0)20 8392 3627

***Dean of School Contact Details:***

<b>Name</b>	Michael Barham
<b>School</b>	Human and Life Sciences
<b>University Address</b>	Roehampton University

Whitelands College,  
Holybourne Avenue,  
London, SW15 4JD

**Email** [M.Barham@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:M.Barham@roehampton.ac.uk)

**Telephone** +44 (0)20 8392 3617

Thank you for taking the time to read this information form.

## APPENDIX III



SCHOOL OF HUMAN & LIFE SCIENCES

Roehampton University,

Whitelands College  
Holybourne Avenue,  
London  
SW15 4JD

## DEBRIEFING INFORMATION

[Participant ID number]

### **Title of Research Project:**

A discourse analytic study into notions of “difference” in counselling psychology.

Many thanks for participating in this research study.

Within the context of a therapeutic relationship, what it means to be “different”, and the full impact of these “differences”, is an area that needs to be explored in the discipline of counselling psychology. Exploration into notions of “difference” in counselling psychology, will allow practitioners to examine their work with clients, and ensure that the discipline maintains self critical and reflective. Postmodern critiques of previous research into “differences” have argued that it can be over simplistic, ethnocentric and pathologising and consequently, further work within this field is needed.

This research proposes that one direction for further exploration could be a discourse analytic stance. With its post-modern roots, discourse analysis will provide a lens through which to examine notions of “difference” in counselling psychology. The aims of this research would be to explore notions of “difference” and the subsequent discourses in counselling psychology, as well as whether the notions of “difference” discussed in the literature are those that really make a difference in counselling psychology practice. Ten counselling psychologists’ have been interviewed about notions of “difference” and which differences, if any, make more of a difference to their practice. The interviews will be transcribed and analysed, exploring the “language in use” as a focus for the study.

The aim here was to describe and critique the discursive world of notions of “difference”, and then explore the implications for subjectivity and experience. Consequently, the questions addressed would include; what is it like for a counselling psychologist to work with someone they see as having a



“difference” that has impacted their relational work, and what actions and experiences are compatible with such a positioning? How do counselling psychologists’ talk about notions of “difference”? Where does this position them? Do any ideological dilemmas present themselves in this talk? How does this compare to notions of “difference” in the literature? How can notions of “difference” be located, historically, socially and politically, and within the context of counselling psychology?

The objectives of analysing discourses on notions of “difference” in counselling psychology would be, to examine the presenting discourses, and how language conveys these discourses, and what social realities are constructed. Potentially this could lead us to whether counselling psychology, as a discipline, would like to challenge, or change, the discourses around notions of “difference” and whether we could, or should, think differently about difference.

If you feel you have further concerns or if you experience any emotional distress, now or in the future please refer to sources of help and support. In addition to the usual sources such as your supervisor or personal therapist, I would like to provide the following resources:

BPS Directory of Chartered Psychologists:

[www.bps.org.uk/e-services/find-a-psychologist/directory.cfm](http://www.bps.org.uk/e-services/find-a-psychologist/directory.cfm)

BACP Directory of Counsellors and Psychotherapists:

[www.bacp.co.uk/seeking\\_therapist](http://www.bacp.co.uk/seeking_therapist)

Samaritans:

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk), Tel: 08457 90 90 90

As the researcher for this project, I would also like to offer you some time to discuss any issues with myself, that have come up for you.

This research study has been conducted by researcher Farrah Hassan (hassanf12@roehampton.co.uk), and supervised by Dr Onel Brookes (o.brookes@roehampton.co.uk) with Dr Diane Bray as director of studies (d.bray@roehampton.co.uk).

#### **Investigator Contact Details:**

Name	<b>Farrah Hassan</b>
School	Human and Life Sciences
University address	Roehampton University

Whitelands College,  
Holybourne Avenue,  
London, SW15 4JD

Email hassanf12@roehampton.ac.uk

Telephone [removed]

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Dean of School (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

**Director of Studies Contact Details:**

**Name** Dr Diane Bray  
**School** Human and Life Sciences  
**University Address** Roehampton University  
Whitelands College,  
Holybourne Avenue,  
London, SW15 4JD  
**Email** D.Bray@roehampton.co.uk  
**Telephone** +44 (0)20 8392 3627

***Dean of School Contact Details:***

**Name** Michael Barham  
**School** Human and Life Sciences  
**University Address** Roehampton University  
Whitelands College,  
Holybourne Avenue,  
London, SW15 4JD  
**Email** M.Barham@roehampton.ac.uk  
**Telephone** +44 (0)20 8392 3617

Thank you for participating in this study.



Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you to request your participation in my PsychD Doctoral thesis research. The title of my project is;

The differences that make a difference in Counselling Psychology; a discourse analytic study into notions of "difference" in counselling psychology.

You are being invited to take part in a research study conducted by a Trainee Counselling Psychologist as part of a PsychD Counselling Psychology, which will explore notions of "difference" in Counselling Psychology, focussing on the language in use.

What can you gain from your participation?

As a reflective practitioner, you may find this experience interesting and enlightening as you consider your perceptions and reactions to "difference", the discourses in relation to notions of "differences", and how these may shape our discipline. It is hoped that this research will help increase awareness of important issues around notions of "difference" and how this affects the practice of counselling psychology.

How will the data be gathered?

A minimum of 10 participants will each be given demographic questionnaires. They will then be asked to participate in a Semi-structured interview at a venue of their choice, which will be audio recorded. These interviews, of an hours duration, will then be transcribed. Participants will be allowed to withdraw part or all of their transcript from the study.

Essential information to consider before participating

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from completing the questionnaire or interview at any time and from the research study via use of an ID number on the debriefing form, which would also state the implications of withdrawal and the use of data in an aggregate form may still be used or published. You will not be obliged to complete the questionnaire or interview if you feel uncomfortable for any reason. Participating in this research could lead you to reflect on past experiences, which may be upsetting or painful, and could lead to re-evaluation of your current situation. If you are

concerned that you may be affected in this way it is advised that you do not take part in this study.

How will you be debriefed?

Following the interview, you will be provided with a list of sources of help and support, which you can call upon if you experience distress as a result of the taking part in this research study. The researcher will also offer time for you to discuss any issues that you may have.

If you are happy to participate in the above study please contact;

#### **Investigator Contact Details:**

Name	<b>Farrah Hassan</b>
School	Human and Life Sciences
University address	Roehampton University  Whitelands College, Holybourne Avenue, London, SW15 4JD
Email	hassanf12@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone	[removed]

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Dean of School (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

#### **Director of Studies Contact Details:**

<b>Name</b>	Dr Diane Bray
<b>School</b>	Human and Life Sciences
<b>University Address</b>	Roehampton University  Whitelands College, Holybourne Avenue, London, SW15 4JD

**Email** D.Bray@roehampton.co.uk  
**Telephone** +44 (0)20 8392 3627

***Dean of School Contact Details:***

**Name** Michael Barham  
**School** Human and Life Sciences  
**University Address** Roehampton University  
Whitelands College,  
Holybourne Avenue,  
London, SW15 4JD  
**Email** [M.Barham@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:M.Barham@roehampton.ac.uk)  
**Telephone** +44 (0)20 8392 3617

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Farrah Hassan

## **APPENDIX V**

### **Transcription Notation**

, = half second pause

. = seconds pause

Underline = emphasis on word or raised voice

[action]

{ } section removed at participants request

## APPENDIX VI

### Participant's Demographic Descriptions

Pseudonym	Descriptions Participants gave of themselves
Violet	41 year old, White British of Italian Origin, 2 <sup>nd</sup> year trainee, Female
Eliza	25 year old, White British of Iranian origin, 3 <sup>rd</sup> year trainee, Female
Zoe	White British, Jewish, Hearing Impaired, Female
Barbara	Austrian born female, living in the UK since the 90's, practicing in counselling psychology since 1996
Jim	British Asian Male, Homosexual, 29 year old, counselling psychologist (doctorate pending)
Claire	Female, qualified counselling psychologist working in schools, married, White British
Eva	Zimbabwe born female, living in the UK, White
Jane	White British female 2 <sup>nd</sup> year trainee from Manchester, heterosexual, able